

Great Religions of the East Series

EDITED BY ERIC S. WATERHOUSE, M.A., D.D., D.Lit.

BUDDHISM

VOLUME TWO

MAHĀYĀNA

C. H. S. WARD

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By

C. H. S. WARD



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TO
MY WIFE

PREFACE

AN ATTEMPT has been made in this volume to cover the wide field of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which has been fairly described as 'that multi-sided and protean thing', with what success the reader must judge for himself.

The need for such a book was urgently felt, especially by students of Comparative Religion, who had to gather their knowledge of Mahāyāna Buddhism from many books, some of the most important of which are out of print and very difficult to obtain from Public Libraries.

This is a second volume in the *Great Religions of the East Series*. The first volume was published under the title *Outline of Buddhism* in 1934. A revised edition was issued in 1947 under the title *Buddhism, Volume One, Hīnayāna*. Then the Editor and the Publishers asked me to write a similar book on Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The two volumes are intended to cover the whole ground of Buddhism in all its varieties and stages of development. As Mahāyāna grew out of Hīnayāna a knowledge of the first volume, which deals with the Buddhism of the *Pāli Piṭakas*, the religion of Ceylon, Burma, and Siam, is assumed.

The present volume deals with what is generally known as 'Sanskrit Buddhism', which includes such important Hīnayāna Schools as the Sarvāstivādins, the Mahāsanghikas, and the Sautrāntikas, the direct ancestors of Mahāyāna. Sanskrit was the sacred language of all these Schools, as well as of Mahāyāna, just as *Pāli* was the sacred language of the Theravādins.

Because we are dealing with Sanskrit Buddhism many names, especially names of persons, will appear strange to

those who are only familiar with the Buddhism of the Pāli Piṭakas. For example, the Pāli Gotama becomes Sanskrit Gautama, Sāriputta becomes Sāriputra, Moggallāna becomes Maugdalyāyana, bhikkhu becomes bhikshu.

Another point that should be noted is the use of ś for sh in modern books. Thus Ashoka becomes Aśoka, Ashvaghosha becomes Aśvaghosha, but the pronunciation remains the same.

The generally accepted scheme of transliteration for Sanskrit words is followed, and the nearest English equivalent of every Sanskrit word or term used is given in the context.

Though, as we have said before, this book has been written primarily for students, it should interest any intelligent reader who is concerned about world affairs, because it will give him an insight into the religious and cultural background of several great Eastern peoples, including the Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Tibetans. It is generally acknowledged that a better understanding of all these peoples is greatly to be desired.

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

BUDDHISM is not so much a religion as a family of religions. Certainly there is a 'great divide' between the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna expressions of the faith. When, at my request, Mr. Ward wrote from his experience in Ceylon upon Buddhism, he naturally chose to write in terms of what one might call the 'classical' or, at least, the less corrupted form of Buddhism. So well did he accomplish the task that I urged the publishers of the series *Living Religions of the East* to issue the necessary complementary book upon Mahāyāna Buddhism. After many delays, largely due to war conditions, Mr. Ward has at last been enabled to see the task completed. There is no other book in English that does for the student what this does, and I believe it will be a standard text-book upon the subject for many years to come.

Mr. Ward's patience, scholarship, fairness of judgement and sympathy are qualities which have made this book what it is. It is no mere compilation from already published sources, but a fresh and forceful expression of the characteristics of a great creed. I commend it unstintingly and in every way deservedly.

E. S. WATERHOUSE

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INTRODUCTION

THE TRADITIONAL view that the Buddha rediscovered the 'Way' which had been trodden by other 'Pathfinders' in far-off ages, and was pointing out that same way to the men of his own day, will not bear examination any more than the theory that his religion was evolved entirely out of his own inner consciousness.

To understand his System we must get back as near as possible to the beginnings of the religious beliefs and practices and speculations of the Indo-Iranians, as we have tried to do in our opening chapter on 'The Background of Buddhism'.

In the sixth century B.C., as that eminent Russian Buddhist scholar Dr. T. I. Stcherbatsky reminds us, 'there was a great effervescence of philosophical thought amongst the non-Brāhmanical classes of India; a way out of phenomenal life was ardently sought for, the majority of the solutions having a materialistic tinge. The Buddha, at that time, propounded, or accepted, a system denying an eternal Soul, and reducing phenomenal existence to a congeries of separate elements evolving gradually toward final extinction.'¹

Amongst the ascetic sects of non-Brāhmans, the pioneers were the *Paribbājakas* (or 'Wanderers'), who believed that bliss can be won in the 'peerless' life by freedom from all evil in (i) acts, (ii) words, (iii) aims, and (iv) mode of livelihood.²

All these four standards of conduct were incorporated in Gautama's Noble Eightfold Path; and the last of the four gave to a separate sect of the *Ājīvakas* ('Mendicants') their specific name. He also borrowed from Brāhmanism the title almsman (*bhikkhu*) for his enrolled followers, and called their enrolment

¹ *Buddhist Nirvāna*, pp. 60-2.

² *Majjhima-Nikāya*, II. 24.

(*pabbajjā*) after the *Paribbājakas*. But while using well-known names and terms, he put his own special meaning into all of them. I have gone more fully into this subject in Section Two 'The Age of Ferment and Change'.¹

All the ascetics (except the 'sky-men', who went naked) wore the yellow robe. The colour, however, does not appear in those early days to have had any religious significance: it really was accidental. These devotees were directed to collect rags from dust-heaps, generally at the Burning Ghats, and stitch them into robes. Such rags would be of a dirty faded yellowish colour, and so the yellow robe was established.

At the present day the new robes of Buddhist monks are supposed to be made of pieces of material stitched together. It is ordered that even the most expensive and beautiful robes should each have at least one patch.

The problem of writing a book on *Mahāyāna* Buddhism is quite different from that of writing one on *Hīnayāna*. The latter possesses a closed *Canon* of scripture, on which it is founded, and to which it must be continually referred, just as all Christian teaching must not only have its roots in the Christian Scriptures, but must also be shown to have developed in harmony with them.

Mahāyāna Buddhism, on the other hand, has no collection of books which, by any stretch of the imagination, can be called a *Canon*. It grew out of *Hīnayāna*, and books were written to justify the tenets of its leading teachers and, in consequence, *Mahāyāna* was continually growing and changing, though its leading dogma, *Sūnyatā*, when once established, remained central for all schools of *Mahāyāna*. In view of this constant growth and change, *Mahāyāna* must be treated historically, and its development traced through the centuries.

We know that in the reign of Kanishka (A.D. 78-123) Buddhism split up into two opposing factions. *Mahāyāna*,

¹ See Chalmers, *S.B.B.*, Vol. V, Intro., pp. xv-xxiv.

however, did not originate then. It had probably been developing from at least the second century B.C., and by the time of Kanishka's council it had become a clearly defined and recognized form of Buddhism.

Scholars are inclined to date some of the *Prajñāpāramitās* as early as the first century B.C., and all the *Prajñāpāramitās* definitely teach *Śūnyatā* (the void), the dogma which the most advanced Hinayānists were unable to accept. We have traced the beginnings of Mahāyāna in Section 3, dealing with the period 232 B.C. to about A.D. 200.

Mahāyāna continued to develop in India during the first six centuries of the Christian era, especially under the influence of such creative thinkers as Aśvaghosha, Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Chandrakīrti, Śāntideva, Chandra-gomin, and many other distinguished teachers.

From the days of the great Indian Emperor, Aśoka, who was its earliest and most notable propagandist, Buddhism had been a missionary religion. By his efforts it was spread throughout the length and breadth of India, and also to Ceylon, to Burma, to the Himalayas, to Afghanistan, and beyond. Later on it spread through central Asia to China, and thence to Korea and Japan. Other missionaries took it to Cambodia, Sumatra, and Java, and it reached Tibet in the seventh century.

This missionary activity saved Buddhism from extinction, because, toward the end of the sixth century A.D., this religion, in the land of its birth, began to degenerate and continued to decline until it was extinguished in the overwhelming Muslim invasion of India.

But by this time it was firmly established in many other lands, and especially in China, because, in the sixth century, Bodhidharma, who has been called the Patriarch of Buddhism, removed from India to China, which became the new headquarters of Mahāyāna.

We have given brief separate descriptions of Buddhism in China, Japan, Tibet, and Mongolia.¹

In Part Two we have discussed the Origin and Development of the Doctrine of Buddhology, and have attempted to trace the Genesis and Evolution of the Theory of *Bodhisattvas*.

In Part Three we have compared and contrasted Hinayāna and Mahāyāna Philosophical Ideas in general, and more particularly in relation to the Theory of *Nirvāna*, which, in spite of all their differences, is the ultimate goal of both Hinayāna and Mahāyāna.

Finally, we have considered certain practical ethical and religious conclusions. A modern school of Buddhist intellectuals has arisen, to which D. T. Suzuki, the Japanese Buddhist scholar and writer, belongs. According to this school the Mahāyāna Cosmological Ultimate, Dharmakāya, is really God, the Creator and Controller of the universe. He is an absolute perfect intelligence who directs the course of the universe not blindly but rationally. His nature is love, and he embraces all beings with fatherly tenderness.

Moreover, according to this school, even *karma* must no longer be regarded as a law of Justice beyond the control of gods and men, which works itself out inevitably to its end, as the Hinayānists believe. Suzuki says: 'The law of *Karma* is an eternal ordinance of the will of Dharmakāya.'

Therefore, we see that Mahāyāna Buddhism is still growing, and, being free from the control of any fixed canon, it possesses an infinite capacity for adapting itself to meet the needs of an ever-changing world.

One serious handicap for the student of Mahāyāna is the fact that most of the original Sanskrit books have been lost, and are only to be found in translations, chiefly Chinese and Tibetan. Many of these have not yet been translated into any Western language. Therefore one is dependent upon a large

¹ See Chapters 16-18, *infra*.

number of specialists who have studied these books and have written about them.

I have acknowledged my debt to many scholars by references throughout this book, but my chief obligations, which I gratefully acknowledge, are to the writings of Dr. J. N. Farquhar, Professor de la Vallée Poussin, Dr. T. I. Stcherbatsky, Dr. A. B. Keith, Professor C. K. Nariman, Dr. E. J. Thomas, L. A. Waddell, Dr. H. Hackmann, Dr. N. Dutt, Professor D. T. Suzuki, Réné Grousset, and, for an intimate picture of modern Japanese Buddhists, to Mr. Robert Cornell's *Buddhism and Buddhists in Japan*.

I have also found the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* a treasury of information, especially on obscure Buddhist subjects—information not easy to obtain elsewhere.

My special thanks are due to Rev. W. C. Bird for his willing help in the compilation of the indexes.

To my wife I am deeply indebted for acting as my typist, and for her untiring help and encouragement, without which this book might never have been finished.

C. H. S. W.

ABBREVIATIONS

Buddhism (Volume One) *Hīnayāna* is cited as *Hīnayāna*.

The following titles are referred to by the name of the author:

Cornell—*Buddhism and Buddhists in Japan*.

Dutt—*Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its Relation to Hīnayāna*.

Farquhar—*Outline of Religious Literature in India*.

Grousset—*In the Footsteps of the Buddha*.

Hackmann—*Buddhism as a Religion*.

Keith—*Buddhist Philosophy*.

Nariman—*Sanskrit Buddhism*.

Suzuki—*Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism*.

Thomas—*History of Buddhist Thought*.

Ward—*The Ethics of Gotama Buddha*.

PART ONE—HISTORICAL

SECTION ONE
The Background of Buddhism

CHAPTER ONE
The Aryan Invaders of India

IT IS now accepted as an axiom of historical criticism that every man must be judged in connexion with his own country and age. This is especially needful when the man happens to be a great thinker or discoverer. The man's genius may be splendid, but it does not make him independent of his age, and race, and circumstances. The living force is within him, but the conditions of its development are without and around him.

Was not even Shakespeare a child of the Elizabethan Age? His genius would have made him remarkable in any age or country, and it must have found an outlet for itself in some creative work of great value to the world, but can we imagine it blossoming out into such perfection as it did in any other period or environment? His work, at least, would have been very different from what it is.

Gautama Buddha is no exception to this rule: he could not have evolved his Philosophical Principles, or have become the Buddha, in any country but India, or in any other age than that in which he lived. The very form and substance of his philosophy he owed to his Indian birth and education, and an analysis of earlier and contemporary philosophical systems shows how little, save the combination, was his own.

It is clear, therefore, that for a true understanding of Buddhism, some knowledge of these earlier systems is essential. But even this knowledge alone will not meet the case; we must

also have a sympathetic appreciation of the conditions of Gautama's early life—especially the thoughts and hopes and fears that possessed the hearts of ordinary men around him, the sins that had dominion over them, and the ideals which allured them upward.

At a period so remote that we cannot even venture to suggest a date, there lived a great white race, probably somewhere in Central Asia, with a common language, a common culture, and a common religion. To this race belong many of the leading races of both Europe and Asia, including the Greek, Albanian, Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Letto-Slavonic, Armenian, and Indo-Iranian, for the languages of all these peoples had their origin in the common Aryan Tongue. This white race is usually spoken of as the Indo-European.

The Aryan invaders of India belonged to this great white race. The various groups which formed the European peoples appear to have broken away, perhaps one by one, over a very considerable period, leaving behind in the original home-land what we now know as the Indo-Iranian people. We have reason to believe that the Indo-Iranians continued to share a common life for centuries after the last of the earlier groups had left the ancestral home.

Eventually, however, this people, also, broke up into two groups, which separated, one moving through Afghanistan into India, and the other spreading out over the wide territory which is still called Iran. It is important to remember that 'Iran' and 'Aryan' are variants of the same name.

We learn from the Sacred Writings of the two peoples, the *Avesta* and the *Vedas*, that these Aryans worshipped the Great Powers of Nature: Sky, Thunder, Sun, Moon, Fire, Wind, Water, and many others, but that, at the time they separated, they had risen above the crude animism and nature worship of their common ancestors, and now worshipped heavenly gods, who were, indeed, personalized Powers of Nature.

Those powers still remained the visible symbols of their gods, so that there were no images or temples in the Vedic Worship.

Ancestor-worship was almost as important to the original Aryans as the worship of the gods. But, at the period with which we are dealing, Ancestor-worship, too, had passed beyond the primitive stage in which departed spirits are still regarded as members of their family, which is in duty bound to provide them with meat and drink. The dead were now conceived to be powerful beings controlling the destinies of their families for good or evil, and, therefore, to be treated with great respect and reverence.

At a later stage these ancestors began to be regarded as gods, and were invited to the sacrifices in the same way as the other gods. In Ancestor-worship the father was the high-priest of the family: he alone knew the peculiar ritual which had to be maintained unchanged if the favour of the dead was to be retained. He taught the ritual to his son.

The gods could be approached only by the priest. In the earliest days these priests were individuals who composed hymns which they dedicated to one or other of the gods, and used in his worship. These hymns were taught to a son or some favourite disciple, under a pledge that they should be revealed only to the one chosen to follow on in the sacred line. The time came when all these hymns were gathered together, and the collection was called the *Rig-veda*, which is believed to be the earliest literature produced within the Indo-European family of peoples.

At the time this collection was made the Brāhman priests formed a distinct profession, though they had not yet developed into a caste. The *Rig-veda* was 'Secret teaching' and was kept within the Brāhman profession—it was strictly forbidden to reveal any part of these teachings to an outsider—and, as many centuries were to pass before these hymns were reduced

to writing, it was not difficult to keep this *esoteric* knowledge within the priestly circle.

Along with the *Vedas* other sacred books were composed, such as the *Brāhmaṇas*, prose commentaries on the *Rig-veda*, and the *Āraṇyaka*, or 'forest treatise' appended to a *Brāhmaṇa*, and meant to be studied by the hermits who dwelt in the forest. And added to the *Āraṇyaka* was an *Upaniṣhad*. These *Upaniṣhads* are writings of great importance, because they were the work of profound thinkers, who developed theories of the world and the soul going far beyond all the earlier teaching of the *Vedas* and *Brāhmaṇas*. All these works were included in the 'esoteric' knowledge sacred to the priests.

Scholars who have studied the *Vedas* speak of the happy and care-free lives of the early Aryans, as reflected in those books. They were a tall fair people, and their women enjoyed much freedom. Their enjoyment of earth was increased by the strong hope that at death they would join their ancestors in another and more desirable world.

But, in process of time, as they penetrated farther and farther into India, and were brought into closer and closer contact with the dark-skinned peoples of the hot valleys and plains with their strange and terrible religious beliefs and practices, this joy in life, and hope in death, faded away and a gloomy pessimism took its place.

The priests strove, generation after generation, to increase their influence and power over the people, and the people submitted because the priest and the sacrifice had become a matter of life and death to them. Therefore the priests were able to bring the whole of life under their control. Through sacrifice and magic the priests believed, or at least led the people to believe, that they could compel the gods to do their will, with the result that the gods faded into the background and the priest and the sacrifice took their place. Magic was now supreme and morality had almost ceased to count.

While the masses of the people submitted to this tyranny, the best men of their age became restless and dissatisfied with life and religion as they knew it. They sought for some better solution of their problems along the lines of speculative thought as revealed in the *Upanishads*.

These thinkers conceived the idea of God, as distinct from the gods, *Brahman*, the One Only, without a second, the Source of all that is, but Himself desireless, actionless, quiescent. Quite independently the concept of *Ātman* was evolved—the Supreme Soul of the universe, the Consciousness as distinct from the material elements of the universe, from whom the consciousness of man, the 'self,' the '*ātman*' was derived. Eventually, *Ātman* became identified in men's minds with *Brahman*, as the 'One Reality' behind the phenomenal universe—the *Brahman-Ātman*.

As man's soul was conceived of as the offspring of *Brahman-Ātman*, it was not difficult to pass to the further conception of 'Brahman is I', 'I am Brahman'. And since *Brahman* alone exists and is *real*, while the entire world of phenomena is merely a delusion, or like a dream image, which seems real to the sleeper, but vanishes when he awakes, I, too, as *Brahman* am *real*. At death I shall lose myself, my individuality, in the *Brahman-Ātman*, but I shall not lose my existence—I am eternal.¹

Here was a way of escape from phenomenal life—the world of impermanence—which involves suffering, sorrow, and death. This end could not be attained through sacrificing priest or phenomenal god, but it might be attained through effort, self-conquest, and, above all, through knowledge, especially the knowledge 'I am *Brahman*'.

The conception of 'identification with *Brahman*' and all

¹ See S. Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*; Paul Deussen's monumental work with the same title; and Mrs. Rhys Davids' *Outlines of Buddhism*, p. 83.

that it implies is a sublime conception, the topmost pinnacle of the temple of Indian speculative thought. But it is not a moral conception: Brahman has no interest in man's conduct, that is to say, in his relations with his fellow men. Morality, to the Indian seeker, means complete severance of self from the world, and not an active participation in the affairs of the world. The world and men are nothing to him.

As an ancient Brāhmaṇa once said: 'The intelligent and wise desire not posterity; what are descendants to us, whose home is the *Ātman*? They relinquish the desire for children, the struggle for wealth, the pursuit of worldly weal, and go forth as mendicants.'

There is another point that we must not overlook. Man has become his own Saviour. He alone, without the help of man or god, has the power to turn aside from the world, to conquer self, and achieve salvation. This has an important bearing on Gautama Buddha's beliefs and teaching, and we shall refer to it again.

Another philosophic doctrine which has influenced all Indian religious thought and life from these early days to the present time must now be considered very briefly, namely the doctrine of Transmigration and *Karma*. There is no trace of this doctrine in the *Vedas*, and it is only hinted at in the *Brāhmaṇas*, therefore we may be sure that the early Aryans knew nothing of it. In the *Upanishads*, however, and in all later Hindu literature the doctrine is universally accepted.

This doctrine, in a crude form, may have been borrowed from the totemistic aborigines of India. But the developed doctrine of Transmigration and *Karma*, as we find it in the *Upanishads*, was without doubt the creation of the Aryan mind, for it is definitely an ethical doctrine. The Aryans believed in an underlying principle of justice pervading the universe—in the end justice would be done.

The theory is that sentient beings are born and die many

times, and that the deeds done in one life will be rewarded or punished, strictly according to their deserts, in another life. The law works inevitably, and it is strictly just. Each man receives in good or ill what is due to him. This doctrine evidently met a felt need; it was a moral advance on earlier ideas, but as men comprehended it more fully it became a source of terror to them.

They perceived that each soul had experienced birth and suffering and death and rebirth from eternity, and that it must go on enduring these experiences for ever, seeing that every action, whether good or bad, demanded satisfaction and repeated rebirths. Belief in this doctrine could end only in despair unless men could at least hope to find some way of deliverance. Such a way the Indian found in the doctrine of personal identity with the *Brahman-Ātman*, as we have shown above.

SPECIAL NOTE ON THE PREHISTORIC HARAPPĀ CIVILIZATION OF THE PUNJAB AND SIND¹

Though it is beyond the scope of this book to enter into a detailed discussion of so large a subject, it seemed necessary to draw attention to the fact that there is every reason to believe that many elements of religion and culture in both medieval and modern Hinduism are survivals of this older civilization.

Recent investigations by archeologists seem to prove conclusively that the Harappā civilization flourished from about 3000 to 1500 B.C., when invaders from the West broke in and ultimately brought this civilization to an end. There

¹ Two important books on this subject have just been published: *Five Thousand Years of Pakistan*, by R. E. M. Wheeler. (Christopher Johnson.)

Prehistoric India, by Stuart Piggott. (Penguin Books.)

can be little doubt that these invaders were the Aryans of the *Rig-veda*.

The old view that the Aryan invaders of India encountered only a rabble of aboriginal savages can no longer be maintained. 'The Aryan advent in India was, in fact, the arrival of barbarians into a region already highly organized into an empire based on a long-established tradition of literate urban culture.' The people of Harappā used a picto-graphic script comparable to the hieroglyphic script of Egypt. This script, however, has not yet been deciphered as no key has been found.

Is it not reasonable to suppose that the conquerors were deeply influenced by the civilization and culture of the people they had conquered?

This prehistoric Indian Empire covered a vast extent of land. It was in the form of a huge irregular triangle with sides measuring 950 by 700 by 550 miles. It contained about forty built-up settlements, including the two large fortified cities of Harappā and Mohenjo-daro, 350 miles apart.

The houses were built of well-fired brick and included bathrooms with very well made brick floors and elaborate drains running out to the street and connected with an efficient drainage which ran under the streets. The whole lay-out and organization of the cities was up to the standard of this example.

'The whole conception shows a remarkable concern for sanitation and health without parallel in the Orient in the pre-historic past, or at the present day. Soak-pits took the eventual sewage.'

That Harappā carried on trade with many foreign countries for hundreds of years has been placed beyond doubt. There is clear evidence of Harappā contact with Sumer from about 2300 to 2000 B.C.

A number of typical Harappā engraved seals were found in

Sumer in deposits of this period—2300 to 2000 B.C. The seals suggest that Harappā merchants were established in Sumerian cities and engaged in trade which may well have included cotton goods.

The Harappā culture may yet be proved to occupy a very important place in the Background of Buddhism.

The following books may be consulted with advantage:

Primer of Hinduism, by J. N. Farquhar, M.A., D.Litt. (pp. 1-51).
Outline of the Religious Literature of India, by J. N. Farquhar (pp. 1-32).
The History of Buddhist Thought, by E. J. Thomas, M.A., D.Litt. (pp. 71-91).
Sakya, or Buddhist Origins, by Mrs. Rhys Davids, D.Litt., M.A. (pp. 22-52).
Buddhist India, by T. W. Rhys Davids, LL.D., Ph.D.

SECTION TWO

The Age of Ferment and Change: from 600 B.C. to the Death of Aśōka (or Ashōka) 232 B.C.

CHAPTER TWO

Mahāvīra and Gautama: Founders of Jainism and Buddhism

THE SIXTH century B.C. was a period of great intellectual activity in India.¹ Many speculative teachers arose, each with his own theory of Philosophy or Religion, or both. All these teachers were ascetics who had given up the home-life and had become homeless ones. They gathered around them as disciples men of like mind with themselves. All these men, teachers and followers alike, were bound together by a common interest—they were searchers after the *ideal*.

Both teachers and disciples wore the yellow robe of the ascetic, and were mendicants dependent upon householders for their daily food, in contrast to the earliest 'forest dwellers', who probably were independent and lived on wild fruits and roots which they gathered for themselves. Whilst these teachers had so much in common both in outward conditions and beliefs, each had his own peculiar doctrines which he taught to the inner circle of his disciples. These yellow-robed homeless ones were called *samanas* ('ascetics') or *bhikshus* (*Pāli*: *bhikkhus*) ('almsmen').

Of all these teachers the most important were Mahāvīra and Gautama. Both belonged to *Kshatriya* families of good position. Mahāvīra founded the system known as Jainism, which

¹ See T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, Chapter 13.

still has a large following in many parts of India. Gautama was the founder of Buddhism.

These two systems developed side by side in India for centuries. Both teachers accepted many of the beliefs common in their day—they believed in the gods, as all their contemporaries did, and in the universally accepted doctrine of transmigration. Both Mahāvīra and Gautama rejected the priestly Sacrificial System of the Brāhmans, and they appear also to have rejected the great doctrine of the *Upanishads* of the neuter and impersonal *Brahman*.

Brahman is not mentioned in the Buddhist *Nikāyas*. The masculine and personal god Brahmā is substituted for him. Brahmā, however, though believed in by the Buddhists, is not honoured by them as he is honoured by the Hindus. The *Nikāyas* represent him as a phenomenal god subject to the law of birth and death and rebirth. Both *reality* and eternity are denied to him. This ignoring of *Brahman* can scarcely have been either accidental, or due to ignorance, seeing that many learned Brāhmans became disciples of Gautama.

This great teacher also ignored the Brāhmanic doctrine of a soul in man that transmigrates at death into another body. But seeing that he believed in a retribution which was inevitably sure and just he substituted for the Hindu doctrine of Transmigration and *Karma* the doctrine of Rebirth and *Karma*.¹

The date of Gautama's birth is very important because it is the first reliable date in Indian history. Scholars are generally agreed that he was born in 563 B.C. and died in 483 B.C. These dates form a starting-point for the conjectural dating of earlier occurrences.²

At this period the three twice-born castes, *Kshatriyas* (warriors), *Brāhmans* (priests), *Vaiśyas* (traders and farmers), were clearly defined and separate one from another, and yet

¹ See *Hinayāna*, Chap. 10 (pp. 83-94).

² See *ibid.*, p. 24.

formed a large community with many common interests in contrast to the vast *Sūdra* caste of serfs, who existed only to serve the 'twice-born'. Far below the *Sūdras* were the unclean outcastes with whom the caste peoples would have no dealings or contact. The word for caste is *vanna* (*varna*) which means 'colour'.

It is important to notice that the original centre of Brāhman culture was in the West, chiefly in the lands between the Ganges and the Jumna, while Buddhism had its early home in the East, especially in Magadha. Therefore the Buddha was not opposed by a powerful well-organized Brāhmanism, but only by individual Brāhman teachers.¹

I have dealt with the life of Gautama Buddha in some detail in my earlier volume,² therefore I need add very little here.

The oldest tradition—and we may accept this tradition as on the whole reliable—represents Gautama Buddha as a man of commanding intellect and magnetic personality. The fact that he attracted men to himself and dominated them by his personal influence alone, confirms the truth of this estimate.

Moreover, his life and character were in harmony with his highest teachings, and had an austere beauty of their own. He became, for India, an example and an ideal of human duty. Though there was little, if anything, original in his practical moral teaching, the emphasis which he laid upon right doing and right thinking was a new thing in India, where men were seeking salvation through asceticism and bodily torture, or else by means of sacrifices, charms, and other ceremonial devices.

Gautama Buddha, both by precept and example, succeeded in convincing men that all these schemes were worthless for the attainment of happiness, either in this life, or in future lives. Happiness, he taught, could be won only by goodness.

We need not wonder, therefore, that the Buddha and his

¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 47-8.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 23-57.

bhikshus became a power in the land, and exerted a far-reaching influence for good upon the lives of ordinary people. It is indisputable that Buddhism, as it spread abroad in those early days, tended to create gentler manners and more kindly feelings among men.

CHAPTER THREE

Aśōka (or Ashōka), the great Buddhist Missionary

OUR KNOWLEDGE of Buddhism and the Buddhist community during the two and a quarter centuries from the death of the Buddha to the conversion to Buddhism of Aśōka is very small indeed. We have no reason to suppose that the religion had spread very far, or had gained great influence, beyond the country of its origin. During this period, however, two political events of great importance happened: Alexander's raid on the Punjab in 326 B.C., and the rise of the Maurya empire in 321 B.C.

This movement on the borders of India led to a revolution and change of dynasty in Magadha, the sacred land of Buddhism. Chandragupta founded the Maurya empire, and his grandson, Aśōka, reigned over it from 273 to 232 B.C. Aśōka's conversion to Buddhism forms one of the great landmarks in the progress of the religion. This conversion was gradual. He was in early life a Hindu of the *Saiva* sect, but about 257 B.C. he appears to have turned toward Buddhism and, eventually, he came entirely under the influence of this religion.

He threw himself with great enthusiasm into the work of propagating the Faith, and spared neither effort nor influence in accomplishing his object. By his zeal he transformed what had been a local sect into a great world religion. His influence on Buddhism, for good or ill, has frequently been compared with the influence of Constantine on Christianity. Aśōka was the outstanding missionary of Buddhism, and carried on his propaganda throughout the whole of his great empire, and beyond to the Island of Ceylon, which became in turn a

missionary centre from which Buddhism reached Burma and Siam.

Asoka designed and had constructed many sacred buildings; monasteries, temples, relic-mounds, monolithic pillars—the ruins of which testify to their magnificence and extent. His edicts engraved on rocks and pillars are of great interest and importance. Many of them remain to this day in a state of good preservation.

Though they contain very little Buddhist doctrine, and not much that is distinctive of Buddhist teaching, except their insistence on the sacredness of animal life, they lay stress upon the duty of respecting and serving one another, and upon truthfulness in life and conduct. Good Brāhmans would be able to accept all these teachings, except that on the sacredness of animal life, which was a severe blow to their sacrificial system.¹

During the reign of Asoka the third Council is said to have taken place at Patna for the revision and standardization of the *Oral Tradition*, the *Sayings of the Buddha*. These *Sayings* were repeated in the presence of the Council by a number of monks, who had each specialized in memorizing some portion of the *Sayings*. There were at that time no written books in India, and all knowledge was carried on by oral tradition—by 'Repeaters'.

At the Council a great purge of unordained and unworthy monks took place. But, at the same time, a considerable number of ordained and learned monks were expelled on the grounds that they did not believe and teach the *Sayings of the Buddha* as held by the majority at the Council. The debates on the doctrines which led to these expulsions have been preserved for us in the *Kathāvatthu*, translated by the Pali Text Society under the title *Points of Controversy*.

¹ See Vincent A. Smith's *Asoka*, and the more recent book, *Asoka* by James M. Macphail. See also T. W. Rhys Davids' *Buddhist India*, Chap. 15 (pp. 272-307), and *E.R.E.*, II. 124-7.

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The expelled men were known as 'Everything-is' theorists. We shall have more to say about these men later on, because amongst them and their successors arose the New Buddhism known as *Mahāyāna*. Mrs. Rhys Davids points out that *yāna* originally meant 'way', and was equal to *marga*, but the *Mahāyānists* translate it as 'vehicle'.¹

¹ See Mrs. Rhys Davids' *Outlines of Buddhism*, Chap. 8, and especially pp. 194-5.

SECTION THREE

From the Death of Aśoka to the Days of Nāgārjuna, the Greatest Authority on *Mahāyāna* Buddhism—232 B.C. to about A.D. 200.

CHAPTER FOUR

Important Political Changes in India

THE DEATH of Aśoka must have been a severe blow to the Buddhist community, especially as his son, who reigned after him, seems to have been a man of weak personality and influence. Nevertheless, the impulse Aśoka gave to the Religion had great and continuing consequences, one of which was the rapid change of this individualistic philosophy into a religion for the common people, which, with its elaborate ritual and gorgeous processions, became the great rival of Brāhmanism for the popular favour.

Buddhism also developed a strong movement toward theism, and the Buddha came to be regarded as a semi-divine being with new and marvellous attributes. This movement coincided with a similar movement within Hinduism. The two religions acted and re-acted upon one another, and it is possible that the influence of Buddhism, with its thousands of Buddhas and its millions of *Bodhisattvas*, was more potent upon Hinduism than the influence of Hinduism was upon Buddhism.

The great importance of political changes during these centuries must not be overlooked, such as the fall of the Maurya empire early in the second century B.C., followed by the rise of a Hindu dynasty, the Sunga. By the middle of the

first century A.D. the Kushans, a Scythian people, conquered the Hindus and seized their empire. The Kushans now reigned over a vast territory stretching from central Asia to the plain of the Ganges.

The Kushans, however, do not seem to have been hostile either to the Hindus or the Buddhists, and both religions developed rapidly within their empire. During these centuries Buddhism spread to Persia, Turkestan, and China.

This period was one of great intellectual activity. The influx of foreigners, especially from Persia and the Roman Empire, bringing in with them new ideas on religion and philosophy, stimulated not only the priests and monks, but also the intelligent laymen to fresh thought and endeavour in order to meet the new teachers on common ground. This influence is clearly seen in that famous Buddhist book, *The Questions of King Milinda*. Indeed, this movement led to great advances in literature, philosophy, and art.

It was during this period, but evidently after the fall of the Maurya Empire, that revised versions of the great epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, were issued as religious works glorifying the god Vishṇu (Viśṇu). By the beginning of the second century B.C., Rāma and Krishna, the heroes of the epics, were regarded as incarnations of Vishṇu. These two epics thus became religious works, and have ever since been regarded as Vaishṇava Scriptures.

During the same period Śiva also became a popular god and shared with Brahmā, the Creator, and Vishṇu, the Preserver, the devotion and worship of the people. These three gods were regarded as emanations of the supreme *Brahman-Ātman*.

It is interesting to note, as we have already suggested, that during the same period Buddhism, which began as an Agnostic philosophy, was changing into a popular religion. When Gautama Buddha died, his relics were divided into seven parts, and seven *stupas*, sacred relic mounds, were erected over them.

Pilgrimages to the *stupas* became common, and devout Buddhists bowed in adoring reverence before the relics. Prayers, however, were not offered to the Buddha in those early days, nor, at this time, had any image or visible symbol of the Buddha been made.

But, about the third century B.C., when the *stupas* began to be adorned with elaborate sculpture, as at Bharahat (Bharhat) and Sanchi, the Buddha is represented by some symbol, especially by the *dharmachakra*, the wheel of doctrine.

In the first century A.D., images of the Buddha appear for the first time. These are seen in the sculptures of Gandhara, the district of which Peshawar is the centre, and are products of the new Indo-Greek art. These images were worshipped by the common people. In fact, the principal object of the Gandhara art is the representation of the person of the Buddha.

This seems to indicate that the Buddha had already become the object of *bhakti*, and now the adoration of the Buddha was pushed into the central point of his religion. At the same time images of the Hindu gods were being made and worshipped.

During the reign of Kanishka, the greatest of the Kushan kings (A.D. 78-123), Buddhism underwent a most significant change. From very early days there had been separate schools of Buddhists, but no schism: members of all schools were able to dwell together in the same monasteries, and to hold friendly intercourse. Rhys Davids compared these schools to the Broad, High, and Low schools of thought in the Anglican Church. But at this period Buddhism divided into two distinct and opposing sects, called Hinayāna and Mahāyāna.

In order to trace the causes of this division, we will, in the next chapter, examine with some care the Early Schools of Buddhism.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Early Schools of Buddhism, and the Evolution
of *Mahāyāna* out of *Hīnayāna*

After the death of Gautama his community is said to have split up into eighteen schools. The questions in dispute among them are discussed in the *Kathāvatthu*, already referred to, which can perhaps be dated about 250 B.C. About some of these schools we know nothing but the names, and even the names are not very reliable. The *Kathāvatthu* is rather a jungle of a book in which the tracks one is trying to follow are apt to disappear without a trace.

Three of these schools are very important: the *Sthaviras* (*Pāli*: *Theravādins*), the *Sarvāstivādins*, and the *Mahāsāṅghikas*.¹

The *Sthaviras*, or *Theravādins*, generally considered to be the oldest of the schools, were found west and north of the Vindhayas in the region of which the capital was Ujjeni, and they predominated in Ceylon. The dialect used by the *Sthaviras* here was probably later on elaborated into the literary language which we now call *Pāli*. We may conjecture that the *Pāli Canon* of Ceylon originated in this region.

I have already dealt with the *Pāli Pitakas*, and with the doctrines of the *Theravādins*, in my first volume,² therefore this school need not detain us.

The schools of the *Sarvāstivādins* and the *Mahāsāṅghikas* are of supreme importance for our present inquiry, because the new tendencies and theories which produced the *Mahāyāna* were chiefly developed in those two schools. It should be noticed that each school had its own dialect, called Mixed

¹ See Thomas, pp. 37-41, and also Appendix II, pp. 288-92.

² *Hīnayāna*, pp. 15-22, and pp. 61-107.

Sanskrit or *Prākṛit*, which finally developed into pure Sanskrit. Sanskrit ultimately became the sacred language of these schools, as Pāli became the sacred language of the Theravādins.

The Sarvāstivādins had much in common with the Theravādins. Their *Canon* contained the *Vinaya* and the *Sutta Piṭakas*. How far these *Piṭakas* differed from the *Pāli Canon* we cannot say as only fragments of the original Sanskrit have survived, but the Tibetan and Chinese translations suggest that they had a common origin, but went on developing after the schools separated.

The *Abhidharma* of the Sarvāstivādins, while superficially corresponding to the *Abhidharma* of the Theravādins, is quite independent of it, and was evidently elaborated after the separation of the two schools.

The Sarvāstivādins also had their own *Life of the Master*, which, under Mahāyāna influences, later developed into the *Lalitavistara*, the most popular and influential of all lives of the Buddha.

The Sarvāstivādins were realists. They were called the 'All-things-exist' school. They held that while everything was in a constant state of flux and restless change the very being, whether material or spiritual, did not cease—it went on becoming, in contrast with the Theravādin theory that there is no underlying reality in either matter or mind.

'When the Sarvāstivādins maintain that "everything exists", they mean that all elements exist, and the emphasis which is put on the reality of elements refers to the conception that their past as well as their future transition represents something real. From this fundamental tenet the school derives its name. Since the conception of an element answers rather to our conception of a subtle force than of a substance, the reality, i.e. effectiveness, of the past is not so absurd as it otherwise would appear.'

'This is in contrast to the *Sauitrāntikas*, who denied the reality of the past and the future in a direct sense; they admitted the reality only of the present. The future, they contended, was not real before becoming present, and the past was not real after having been present. Unfortunately, the original works of the *Sauitrāntika* school are not yet accessible, and we are dependent for our information about this school chiefly to Vasubandhu's *Ab.K.*'¹

However, the following passage from Buddhaghosha's *Visuddhimagga* appears to express their views:

'The being of the past moment of thought has lived, but does not live, nor will it live.'

'The being of the future moment of thought will live, but has not lived, nor does it live.'

'The being of the present moment of thought does live, but has not lived, nor will it live.'²

This school spread toward the North-West of India, among the *Sūrasenas*, and their chief seat was at Mathura (Muttra in the United Provinces). The *Mūla-Sarvāstivādins*, a very important sect of this school, were found chiefly in Kashmir.³

The *Mahāsāṅghikas* were idealists in metaphysics. They so idealized the Buddha as almost to lose sight of his historical personality. They identified him in his essential essence with the Universal Buddhahood, which in time became identification with the Universe.

They acknowledged that when Gautama appeared on earth he seemed to have a body with sense-organs, and to receive impressions through them. But this was an illusion—his mind really received all impressions directly without the aid of sense-organs. In actual fact what men saw was merely an

¹ See Stcherbatsky, *Central Conception*, p. 42.

² See Warren, *Buddhism in Translations*, Chapter 8, p. 150; *Hīnayāna*, pp. 76 ff.

³ See Thomas, pp. 37-8.

illusory phantom of himself which he sent to teach men and to lead them to deliverance.

An important branch of this school was known as the *Lokottaravādins*, or Transcendentalists. They believed that Gautama, the Buddha, who appeared on earth, was not a human being, suffering pain, hunger, weariness, disappointment, and all the other ills of human life, but that he was a Superman, a *lokottara*, superior to and independent of the world. This theory is developed in the *Mahavāstu*, a book of great importance for our present study, because it forms a bridge between the *Hinayāna* and the *Mahāyāna*. We shall have to examine the *Mahāvastu* with great care later on.

The Evolution of Mahāyāna out of Hinayāna

Whilst the Theravādins have a complete *Canon of Scripture* in Pāli, which was finally closed by a Sinhalese Council under Vatta Gamani, the king of Ceylon, about 50 B.C., the Mahāyānists have no collection of books which can by any stretch of the imagination be called the *Mahāyānist Canon*.¹

The Three Baskets of China is a collection of texts drawn from many Buddhist lands during a period covering centuries. It contains both *Hinayāna* and *Mahāyāna* texts, and even philosophical treatises of Brāhmanism.

Tibet has an immense sacred literature divided into two groups: the *Kanjur*, or *Word of the Buddha*, and the *Tanjur*, containing works by disciples, and especially commentaries on the books of the *Kanjur*. With the exception of a few translations from the Pāli, these are all *Mahāyānist books*.²

The Nepalese Buddhists have substituted for the ancient *Canon* an extensive literature containing ancient fragments, and many later books of great importance in the study of

¹ See Nariman, pp. 7-10.

² See *ibid.*, p. 167.

Mahāyāna. The following nine *dharmas* are especially worthy of notice:

(1) The *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, which describes the ten stages (*bhūmis*) of the Bodhisattva career.

(2) The *Saddharmapundarīka*, *The Lotus of the True Religion*. This book probably appeared toward the end of the first or the beginning of the second century A.D.¹ but six of the chapters (21-6), as it has come down to us, are of later origin. The original work contains the whole Mahāyāna System, and is the most important of all the Mahāyāna *Sūtras*.

In it Gautama the Buddha is represented practically as an omnipotent God, who controls the universe and all its creatures. He himself dwells continually in infinite glory. The writer of *The Lotus* has obviously been deeply influenced by current Hinduism. Indeed, it would be impossible to exaggerate the influence of this book in India and China, and later on in Nepal. It is the most popular of all Buddhist books in Japan today. We shall have to consider the teaching of this book more in detail at a later stage of our inquiry.

(3) *Aśṭasāhasrikā*; (4) *Lalitavistara*; (5) *Laṅkāvatāra*; (6) *Suvarnaprabhāsa*; (7) *Tathāgataguhyaka*; (8) *Samādhīrāja*; (9) *Daśabhūmiśvara*.

All these scriptures are called *Vaipulyasūtras*, that is to say, full, complete *sūtras*, and they are all formally worshipped as divine in Nepal.²

All this is preliminary to our endeavour to trace the evolution of Mahāyāna from the Hinayāna.

¹ See *E.R.E.*, VIII. 145-6.

² See Nariman, op. cit., p. 64.

CHAPTER SIX

The *Mahāvastu*, the *Book of the Great Events*, and the *Lalitavistara*, 'A Descriptive Life of the Buddha'

WE WILL begin our investigation with the *Mahāvastu*, the *Book of the Great Events*, or, as it calls itself: *The Vinaya Piṭaka according to the Lokottaravādins belonging to the Mahāsanghikas*.

Though this book claims to be a part of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, only about twenty pages out of thirteen hundred treat of discipline.

The *Mahāvastu* is a huge compilation without definite plan or order. It contains a miraculous history of the Buddha and of his chief disciples, and includes an enormous collection of *Jātakas* ('birth stories') some of which are identical with stories found in the *Pāli Canon*, but many others are quite new. We find here also interminable lists of Buddhas.

It would appear that the *Mahāsanghikas* collected all that they thought worth preserving into the *Mahāvastu*. This process was continued through several centuries, and that would account for both the great size of the book, for its lack of ordered arrangement, and for its many repetitions, some stories being repeated in almost identical language—for example, the legend of the Buddha's birth is recounted no fewer than four times.

The *Mahāvastu* tells us very little that is new about the life of the Buddha, but it has a special value for us because of its close contacts with the *Pāli* tradition. We meet the Bodhisattva first in the time of the Buddha Dipankara, under whose influence he takes the vow to become a Buddha. Again we see him in the heaven of the Tushita gods. His time has come to

be again reborn. He decides to be reborn in India, in the womb of Queen Māyā. We have a description of his birth, his leaving home, his illumination under the Bodhi-tree, the gathering of his first disciples—all this harmonizes with the Pāli tradition.

But, while this is true, the *Mahāvastu*'s theory of the person of the Buddha differs materially from that of the *Pāli Piṭakas*. The Buddha of the *Mahāvastu* is a superman, a *lokottara*, superior to the world. This theory links up the *Mahāvastu* with the Mahāyāna.

In this book the Bodhisattva (the future Buddha) is described as dying and being reborn through many lives, now as the son of a merchant, then as a Brāhman, again as a Nāga prince, as a lion, as an elephant, as a universal monarch. In all these lives he is represented as showing the most fantastic generosity, such as surrendering his wife and child only to learn a wise maxim. When he heard that the straw thatch which he had recently put on his hut had been given away in his absence he rejoiced over it for a month.

He is also represented as a great magician: for example, he was able to touch the sun and moon with his hand. On one occasion when a host of gods come out to hold up their umbrellas over the Buddha to do him honour, with his usual compassionateness he makes one Buddha to appear under each umbrella, so that each god believes that the Buddha is seated under his own umbrella.

Buddha *Bakti* is also very prominent here. Great merit is attached to adoration of the Buddha, merit sufficient for the attainment of Nirvāṇa. Again, the offering of flowers to the Buddha, or circumambulating a *stupa* will earn for the devotee infinite reward. Such teaching also forms a link with Mahāyāna.

It is difficult to fix a date for the composition of the *Mahāvastu*. The fact that it is written entirely in a peculiar *Mahā-*

sanghika mixed Sanskrit points to an early date, as also do those passages which are identical with passages in the ancient *Pāli Canon*, since borrowing from the written texts is not suggested, but rather a common tradition.

There are other characteristics of the book, however, which suggest a later date, such as a reference to the halo of the Buddha, because the halo appears first in Indo-Greek art, which is not earlier than the first century A.D.

The *Mahāvastu* also contains references to the Huns and to the Chinese language and writing, which could not be earlier than the fourth century A.D. There is also a reference to the *Yogācāras*.¹ Since the rise of the *Vijñānavādin*, or *Yogācāra*, system within Buddhism cannot be dated earlier than about A.D. 300, this section cannot be earlier than that date.

The chapter called *Daśabhūmika*, which we find in the first volume, and which describes the ten stages (*bhūmis*) through which a man passes in becoming a Buddha, and the virtues he must possess in each of the ten stages, must have been inserted at a late date, because this is full *Mahāyāna* teaching. This shows very clearly the evolution from *Hinayāna* to *Mahāyāna* in the *Lokottaravādin* School.

The core of the *Mahāvastu* is old and the book was probably first composed at least two centuries before Christ, at the time when the *Pāli Piṭakas* were taking their final shape. This book, however, was expanded as late as the fourth century, or perhaps even later, probably to bring it into harmony with the advanced *Mahāyāna* teaching.²

The Lalitavistara

The next work to be considered is the *Lalitavistara*. While the *Mahāvastu* claims to be a *Hinayāna* work, though it has

¹ I. 120.

² See Nariman, pp. 11-18; Farquhar, pp. 109, 110, 132; and also *E.R.E.*, VIII. 328-30.

assimilated a good many Mahāyāna teachings, the *Lalitavistara* is one of the most sacred of the Mahāyāna texts, and is regarded as a *vaipulya sutta*. Yet it, too, began as a descriptive life of the Buddha for the Sarvāstivādin School of the Hinayāna, though in the form in which it has come down to us it contains the full Mahāyāna teaching.

This book introduces us to the Bodhisattva (the future Buddha) in the Tushita heaven (the heaven of the gratified gods), where he is surrounded by thousands of monks and tens of thousands of Bodhisattvas. All the gods do homage to him, and even the supreme god Brahmā obeys his every suggestion.

As the time of the Bodhisattva's next birth is drawing near, he decides to be born in the world of men, in the country of India, in the house of King Suddhodana, and in the womb of his Queen, Māyā, who alone among women possesses all the qualities of a Buddha's mother.

He descends from Tushita with great pomp, and to the strains of celestial music, He enters the womb of his mother in the form of a white elephant. The gods prepare a casket of jewels in her womb in which the Buddha may remain unsmeared during the ten months before his birth.¹ Sitting in his beautiful casket, clearly visible to his mother, he preaches pious sermons to the attendant gods to their great benefit and delight.

He is born not as an ordinary human being but as the *Mahāpurusha*, 'the great Spirit'. In the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads* the title *Mahāpurusha* is reserved for the Creator, *Prajāpati*, and is given later on to *Brahmā* and *Vishṇu*.

As the story proceeds there is often an extraordinary harmony with the most ancient Pāli accounts, but it is evident that the two texts are not dependent upon each other, but both go back to a common older tradition. But the *Lalitavistara* contains much that is new. For example, we are told that when the boy Bodhisattva was brought to the temple

¹ Note: Indians reckon by lunar months.

by his foster-mother all the images of the gods got up from their pedestals and prostrated themselves at his feet.

Again, when the little Bodhisattva went first to the writing-school surrounded by celestial glory, and accompanied by ten thousand boys and a multitude of gods, while eight thousand heavenly nymphs scattered flowers before his feet, the writing-master, dazzled by the radiant splendour, fell to the ground. Subsequently, the youthful Bodhisattva amazes the master by asking him in which of the sixty-four scripts he is going to instruct him. He proceeds to name the sixty-four, and in these are included the Chinese symbols, and the script of the Huns—alphabets of which the teacher did not even know the names.

Both these stories, however, must have been late insertions, because image-worship, in the form described, dates only from about the time of the Gandhara sculpture, and neither the Huns nor the Chinese were known until centuries after the Buddha's birth.

Our limited space forbids a more detailed description of this important book, but these few notes will give the reader a fair idea of its character and scope. The very title of the book, *Lalitavistara*, means 'the exhaustive narrative of the sport of the Buddha'. Thus the life work of the Buddha on the earth is characterized as the diversion (*lalita*) of a supernatural being.

The *Lalitavistara* is valuable as a key to the development of the Buddha legend from its earliest beginnings, showing how the Buddha, beginning as an ascetic, an agnostic in religion, and a great leader of ascetics, ended his career more like a god above all gods than a man. Here we have the fully developed Mahāyāna doctrine of the Buddha.

Another book belonging to our period is *The Lotus*, which we have already briefly mentioned, but which we must now describe in greater detail.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Lotus of the True Doctrine (Saddharmapuṇḍarīka)
and Sukhāvatīvyūha (Description of the Land of Bliss)

THE *Lotus*, as we have it, is evidently a revised form of an earlier book, and six of the chapters of the work as it has come down to us (21-6) are of still later origin, and deal especially with Bodhisattvas. Nevertheless, even in its revised form, the *Lotus* is one of the earliest extant *sūtras* which deal with the new mythology of the Buddha belief, and with the Bodhisattva doctrine.

This book was written with the definite object of bringing over the Hinayānists to Mahāyāna, as we hope to show. The *Sūtra* begins by stating, in exactly the same phraseology as the oldest Pāli discourses, that the Lord was staying at Vulture Hill with twelve hundred *ārhats*. In the audience there is also a group of 80,000 Bodhisattvas, enormous numbers of gods led by Śakra and Brahmā, and millions of other beings. Many great disciples, who were supposed to have attained Nirvāna, are also there. These are now shown to be converts to the Buddha career.

The Buddha announces that it is quite true that he appeared on the earth as a man, and as a man for forty years taught the doctrine, and then made a show of attaining Nirvāna. All this, however, was but a device to lead people, who were too foolish to understand the higher Mahāyāna doctrine, a step farther on the upward road. His human life was mere appearance, a sort of magic show: he never was a man—he was really eternal, and had always been in the world. He would continue in his career as a Buddha for many ten million

myriads of hundreds of thousands of cycles before attaining final Nirvāṇa.

The old doctrine of Nirvāṇa, which he had taught, was like a magic city, which a great leader of men caused to appear in the wilderness. His followers had grown weary and discouraged because of the length and hardness of the way; they were ready to turn back. Nevertheless, after they had found rest and refreshment in the magic city they were willing to proceed on their way to Jewel Island (Ratnadvīpa), their ultimate destination.

Thus the *Lotus* admits that, in a way, all the things the Hinayānists claimed were true. They were true as appearances but not in reality. The real and true explanation of all those things was what the Mahāyānists believed and taught. This book presents the popular side of the Bodhisattva doctrine. It is devoted to expounding the new doctrine of the nature of a Buddha, and in explaining away the *pratye-kabuddha* (*paccakabuddha*) and the career of a disciple, or ārhatship, as errors or mere temporary expedients.

It will be seen that the chief interest of the *Lotus* is devoted to the Buddhas and their qualities. The Buddhas are conceived of as mighty beneficent beings rivalling the gods of surrounding Hinduism—they became little else than the gods of the old polytheism under other names. The element of devotion to the Buddha (*bhakti*) was very prominent.

In the *Lotus* the Bodhisattvas are quite subordinate to the Buddhas except in Chapters 22-6, where the Bodhisattvas are given great prominence, and become chief objects of worship for the common people, almost putting the Buddhas into the shade. But, as we have already seen, these chapters are late additions.

To the ordained members of the Order, and to intelligent laymen, the Bodhisattva career was a beneficial and self-sacrificing ideal far surpassing the winning of Nirvāṇa for

oneself, which had been the *summum bonum* of *ārhatship* in Hinayāna. For if one became a Bodhisattva—and this course was open to everybody—one might be able to win multitudes to the Bodhisattva career, and so on to Buddhahood, and ultimately to Nirvāṇa.

But this is not the conception which is prominent in the *Lotus*. There we have the popular views of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as beings worthy of worship, and able to confer priceless benefits on their clients. As a form of worship it differed little from popular Hinduism. This practical blending with Hinduism probably led, more than anything else, to the final disappearance of Buddhism from India, the land of its birth.

Moreover, the influence of the *Vedānta* and of the *Gītā* are very prominent in these Chapters (22-6). The conception of Krishna-Vishṇu as Supreme is adapted to Buddhist conceptions. Many of the titles are borrowed unchanged, such as Supreme Spirit, Self-existence, Great Father, World-father. Ruler of the Triple World, Creator, Destroyer, Physician. The Buddha is Everlasting, All-knowing, All-seeing. He wields magic power, *māyā*, which he uses in sport, *līlā*. He is repeatedly reborn in the world of living beings—especially when men become unbelieving he appears in the world to save.¹

The 24th Chapter is devoted to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, a great saviour, who is praised by the Buddha for all the benefits he has conferred on the Buddha's worshippers.² It should be noted that though the *Lotus* gives a list of sixteen Buddhas, two of them otherwise famous, Akshobhya in the east and Amitābha in the west, Śākyamuni is still regarded as the chief, and occupies the centre of the Buddha worlds. Nevertheless, each Buddha has a world of his own where he

¹ See Farquhar, pp. 114-15.

² See Thomas, p. 190; and Nariman, p. 72.

reigns supreme, without interference from any other Buddha. The supremacy of Śākyamuni is another link with Hinayāna.

Chapter 21 of the *Lotus* is entitled 'Spells' (*dhāranī*). Spells were very prominent in Indian religion from Vedic times. They were and are popular amongst Buddhists, Hinayānists and Mahāyānists alike. The *Lotus* itself came to be treated as a magical book, bringing blessing to all who read it, hear it read, write out portions of it, or cause them to be written. A very popular element in Ceylon Buddhism, ancient and modern, is *pirit* or *pirita* (Pāli: *paritta*) 'protection.' *Pirita* consists of portions of the *Piṭakas* which are read aloud by the monks to drive away sickness, devils, and fears of all kinds.¹

Although the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* represents later and earlier ingredients, it displays much greater unity of character than either the *Mahāvastu* or the *Lalitavistara*. It must have been first written about the end of the first or early in the second century A.D., seeing that in its present compass it was translated into Chinese between 265 and 316 A.D. The book represents a high development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially in the direction of Buddha *bhakti*, the adoration of relics, the worshipping of images, and above all, a highly flourishing epoch of Buddhist art, because *stupas*, magnificent *viharas*, *topes*, and monasteries with their images of the Buddha are mentioned. It is important to note that the *Lotus* is the Sacred Book of the Nichi-ren sect in Japan, and that it was translated into English by Kern.²

Sukhāvatīvyūha, or *Description of the Land of Bliss*

There is another and very different type of Mahāyāna Buddhism from any we have yet described, which has little to say

¹ See Thomas, 'Note on Spells,' op. cit., pp. 186-8, and *Hinayāna*, p. 128.

² *S.B.E.*, Vol. XXI. See *E.R.E.*, VIII. 145-6; *Nariman*, pp. 64-74; and Thomas, pp. 177-88.

about philosophical doctrines, or even about the discipline of the Bodhisattva-career. This School shows how every living being may make sure of being born in the Western Paradise, which is far removed from the world of Śākyamuni, and a much more desirable world. This birth in Paradise will not happen at some remote period, but immediately at the close of this life.

In this Land of Bliss lives a great Buddha, Amitābha ('the Buddha of immeasurable light'), or, as he is also called, Amitāyus ('the Buddha of immeasurable life').

A representative text of this School, and perhaps the greatest, is the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*. We have this *sūtra* in both a longer and a shorter form in Sanskrit. The longer form is probably the earlier, and the shorter form condensed from it. As the longer text was translated into Chinese before A.D. 170, it belongs to our period.

In the book we have a description of the Land of Bliss, where pleasures of all sorts abound, and are to be enjoyed by all its inhabitants. And if anyone misses something he would like to enjoy he can have it by just wishing for it.

We can understand both the ancient and modern popularity of this teaching, seeing that everlasting happiness can be attained without personal efforts or even merits. For we are told that any person who devoutly prayed to be born in that world, or even only thought of Amitābha with a single thought, would in the moment of death pass into the Land of Bliss.

All this is brought about by the grace of Amitābha, who had so practised the virtues, and sacrificed himself for others through innumerable lives, that he had acquired a treasure of merit sufficient to supply the needs of all living creatures, and compensate for all their demerits. He had, in fact, become the Universal Saviour.

A third book, called *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra*, insists especially upon Amitāyus as an object of meditation or *dhyāna*. If a man meditates with concentration upon Amitāyus, by means of this meditation he will attain his highest wish, birth in Paradise. This *sūtra*, unfortunately, is only preserved in a Chinese translation.

These three texts are the foundation scriptures of the two Japanese sects of Jodoshu and Shiushu. The latter has the largest number of adherents of any Buddhist sect in Japan. The literary value of these texts is low, but their religious value can scarcely be exaggerated.

These three books have been translated into English in the *Sacred Books of the East*, Volume XLIX, Part 2.¹

We have now reached a stage in our investigation at which we can estimate the contribution made towards the development of Mahāyāna by individual men.

¹ See *E.R.E.*, VIII. 331b, and II. 687-9; *E.R.E.*, I. 386; Farquhar, pp. 117-18; Nariman, pp. 77-9.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Great Mahāyāna Teachers: Aśvaghosha (Ashvagho-
sha) and Nāgārjuna

THE FIRST of these, Aśvaghosha, a Brāhman, began life as a Hindu, but, later on, became a Buddhist and joined the Sarvāstivādin School. Eventually, however, he was led to become a Mahāyānist.

He was a man of great intellectual power, and a poet of real distinction. Aśvaghosha was, probably, the greatest master of Sanskrit of his day, and became a model for his own and future generations.

His greatest work is the *Buddhacharita*, an epic poem on the life of the Buddha. Though the Tibetan translation contains 28 cantos, the Sanskrit text which we possess has only 17 cantos, and the first 13 of these alone are old and genuine—the concluding portion having been added by a copyist, Amritānanda, about the beginning of the ninth century.

It should be added that an Indian scholar, Haraprasada Shastri, has discovered a manuscript in Sanskrit which reaches down to the middle of the 14th canto.¹

The *Buddhacharita* is distinguished by the moderation of its language, and the considered and artistic arrangement of its material, in contrast to the crude language and chaotic disorder of the *Mahāvastu*, and the extravagance of the *Lalitavistara*.

None the less, it is a miraculous presentment of the Buddha legend, and in writing it Aśvaghosha was probably influenced by the *Rāmāyana*. There is nothing in the *Buddhacharita*, however, which can be called Mahāyāna doctrine.

¹ See Nariman, p. 31.

Āśvaghosha was the author of a second poem, *Saundarā-nandakāvya*, which deals especially with the history of the loves of Sundari and Nanda.

Nanda, the half-brother of Gautama Buddha, was forcibly taken away from his lovely bride, Sundari, and initiated into the Order against his will. Nanda weeps and laments for his lost wife, and refuses to be consoled.

The Buddha resolves to take Nanda up to one of the heavens where the celestial nymphs are of indescribable beauty. As they are flying together over the Himalayas the Buddha draws Nanda's attention to a hideous one-eyed monkey, and asks whether his lost love, Sundari, is more beautiful than the monkey. Nanda is horrified, and declares that such a comparison is impossible.

Nevertheless, when they reach the heaven, and Nanda sees the *upsaras*, or celestial nymphs, his soul is ravished by their loveliness, and he admits that the nymphs are as much more beautiful than his Sundari, as she is more beautiful than the ugly one-eyed monkey.

From that moment he thinks no more of his wife, but submits to the most cruel and exhausting ascetic practices that he may qualify to be reborn in the heaven of the celestial nymphs.

Eventually, Ānanda succeeds in convincing Nanda that even celestial nymphs are not worth striving for, but only Nirvāṇa. Thereupon Nanda retires to the forest, practises the four meditations, and becomes an *ārhat*, and looks forward to attaining *Parinirvāṇa* at the end of this life.

The Buddha, pleased with his strategy so far, and hoping to attain a further victory, took Nanda aside, and showed him how much more desirable it was that he should postpone his own Nirvāṇa, and follow the Bodhisattva career. By so doing he would be able to preach salvation to others, and conduct them on their way to emancipation. Needless to say, Nanda acceded to the Buddha's request.

This postponing of one's own Nirvāṇa for the sake of others is a distinctive Mahāyāna doctrine.

We possess a third great book by Aśvaghosha, the *Sūtrā-
laṅkāra*, or *Sūtra Ornament*, which is a collection of pious legends after the model of the *Jātakas* and *Avadānas*.

The *Sūtrālaṅkāra* must be later than the *Buddhacharita*, because the latter is quoted in it. From internal evidence it would appear that King Kanishka was alive when it was composed. Unfortunately, the Sanskrit original of this book is lost, and we have only the Chinese translation, made about A.D. 405, though fragments of the original Sanskrit have been discovered at Turfān.¹

Real Mahāyānist Buddha-*bhakti* is taught in this book, especially in No. 68. There we read that Gautami, the foster-mother of Gautama Buddha, attains Nirvāṇa through the grace of the Buddha.²

This book is of great importance for many reasons. For example, it mentions the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It also criticizes the teachings of the Sāṅkhya and Vaiśeṣika Schools, as well as the Brāhmans and the Jains.

Aśvaghosha is the reputed author of several other books of great importance in the development of Mahāyāna doctrine.

One of these is the *Vajrasūchī*, or *Diamond Needle*, which contains a violent polemic against the caste system of the Brāhmans. The democratic spirit of this book is very remarkable, and it is doubtful whether Aśvaghosha wrote it. In the Chinese *Tripiṭaka Catalogue* it is described as translated into Chinese between 973 and 981, and is ascribed to Dharmakīrti.³

On the other hand, the great Chinese traveller and Buddhist scholar, I-Tsing, attributes this book to the poet Mātriceṭa. The Tibetan historian, Taranatha, however, declares that

¹ See *ibid.*, pp. 193-206.

² See *ibid.*, p. 37.

³ See *ibid.*, p. 39; and Keith, p. 227.

Mātrīceta is only another name for Aśvaghosha. On the evidence available, it is very difficult to decide who was the author of this book.

Great Mahāyānists, like Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, valued and admired these philosophical hymns, which became models for all composers of hymns after him in India.

A much more important book attributed to Aśvaghosha is the *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda*, or the *Rise of the Mahāyāna Faith*, which Keith describes as one of the best of Buddhist philosophical treatises, and worthy even of Aśvaghosha's fame. This work was translated into Chinese in 554 and again in A.D. 710.

The evidence of Aśvaghosha's authorship is not convincing. The internal evidence is all against it, as we find in the book an advanced form of *Vijñānavāda*, which we associate with Asaṅga.¹

The distinguished Japanese Buddhist scholar, Suzuki, however, claims that the book is Aśvaghosha's, and, on the strength of this claim, declares him to be the actual founder of the Mahāyāna Sect.

The *Buddhacharita* can be read in an English translation in *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XLIX.²

Nāgārjuna

Another great Mahāyānist was called Nāgārjuna. He was born probably in the latter half of the second century A.D., in a Brāhmaṇ family in South India, and is said to have studied the four *Vedas*, and acquired all the sciences. His books certainly betray familiarity with Brāhmaṇ knowledge.

He is also reputed to have been a wizard, possessing marvellous powers, and among them the ability to make himself invisible. This enabled him to enter the *harīm* of the royal

¹ See Keith, p. 228.

² See *E.R.E.*, II. 159-60; Nariman, pp. 28-40; Farquhar, pp. 115-16.

palace, followed by three companions, where they were discovered. His companions were executed, and he escaped only by convincing the king that he had already vowed to become a monk.

He was already a convert to Buddhism, and he kept his vow to become a monk. His biographer says that he began to study the three *Pitakas*, mastered their meaning in ninety days, and then propagated Buddhism in Southern India with great success. We are further informed that he was at the head of the religious propaganda for over three hundred years. The Tibetans go farther and say that he was six hundred years old when he died. There are many other legends about him which we have not room to relate.

His chief interest for us lies in his books. We may confidently accept as his the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, memorial verses, in which he sets out his system, an absolute negativism. He also wrote a commentary on this work, called *Akutobhayā*, which is now known to us only in a Tibetan translation, though a revised version by an unknown hand was rendered into Chinese by Kumārajīva, to whom we owe a legendary biography (about A.D. 405) of Nāgārjuna.¹

The *Mādhyamakakārikās*, or *Middle Doctrine*, is a systematic philosophical work on the familiar lines of Brāhmanic scientific literature. The book and the commentary were epoch-making in Mahāyāna.

Nāgārjuna is regarded as founder of the principal branch of Mahāyāna Buddhism. His system is called *Mādhyamaka* because its leading idea, 'All things are empty', takes the middle course between existence and non-existence. He was the first man to think out to its final limits, and to express clearly, the new doctrine of Vacuity.

We need not regard him as the creator of the doctrine of the void—it probably originated before his time, and had been

¹ See Keith, pp. 229-30.

discussed widely amongst Mahāyānist scholars. What Nāgārjuna did was to collect, and harmonize, and unify all these discussions. When he had done so, he gathered up the subject and finally fixed the doctrine in his great book.

There is also another authoritative commentary on the *Mādhyamakakārikās*, called *Prasannapādā*, by Chandrakīrti, who lived in the first half of seventh century A.D.¹

Though Nāgārjuna was a thorough-going docetist, he did not deny the bodily presence of the Buddha in the world as a historical fact. His system was founded upon this fact, and he professed to have received it from the Buddha—he does not claim to be the creator of it. Moreover, he desires to conciliate the Hinayānists, and so makes this concession to their views. But he draws a sharp distinction between the Buddha's physical body (*jātakāya*) and his real substance (*dharmakāya*).

Gautama Buddha seemed real to men. They saw him with their eyes, they heard his voice, became his disciples, and strove to follow his teaching and example. But, according to the doctrine of the *void*, the Buddha was no more real than the other visible and tangible things they perceived with their senses—no more real, indeed, than themselves.²

This whole world of the senses is mere illusion, a phantom show, unsubstantial as a dream-image. The Buddha whom men thought they saw was only a phantom of himself, which he caused to appear for their good. According to Nāgārjuna the phenomenal world has not merely no *real* existence, it has not even a phenomenal existence.

To meet this difficulty Nāgārjuna formulated two kinds of truth—the commonsense truth by which we live in this world, and real truth which is eternal. We have to live in this unreal world, and so we must accept it at its face value. Especially

¹ See Chap. 12, para. 7, *infra*.

² See Chap. 7, *supra*.

must we try to live our lives according to the teachings of Śākyamuni.

If we do so live we shall come at last to realize ultimate truth—the truth that there is nothing at all; only a blank, *sarvam śūnyam*. The title of *Tathāgatā* was given to the Buddha on account of his revelation of this ultimate truth (*tathatā*) of vacuity.

As we have already suggested, the *Tathāgatā* himself is no exception to this rule—he comes from nowhere and goes to nowhere—he is like space, essentially nothing but vacuity. Nāgārjuna confessed a complete negativism or *śūnyavāda*, which denied both Being and non-Being at the same time. Wisdom is real truth, knowledge of the vacuity of things.

However hard this doctrine of the vacuity of all things may be to grasp, however foolish it may appear to our immature minds, it is the final truth of the world, which we shall be able to see for ourselves as truth when we become Buddhas.

This doctrine of *vacuity* is not a rational system, it cannot be proved, but must be accepted by faith, a faith in the emptiness of all things which does not profess to see the truth of what it believes, but holds hard by its faith, while it frankly lives on that which it declares to be illusion.

Many other works are attributed to Nāgārjuna, but whether they really are his, or only fathered on him because of the great respect in which his name was held by succeeding generations, we have no means of knowing. But his *Mādhyamakakārikās* and *Akutobhayā* are sufficient to establish his reputation as one of the greatest personalities, scholars, and thinkers the Mahāyāna School has ever produced.

Nāgārjuna himself, however, is far from claiming originality for his work. He claims our respect because the Buddha, five centuries before, prophesied his advent and his ability to teach. All that was true in his teaching, he claims, came from

the Buddha. In fact, all that is true in our age, or in any other age, can be traced to the utterances of Buddhas.¹

During our period Buddhism was introduced into China, but, in spite of the enthusiasm and devotion of its missionaries, it did not make great progress among the people. But the way to success was being prepared by many translations of Buddhist books, both *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna*, but mostly the latter, into Chinese.

The four chief translators are worthy of note, both their names and nationalities. They were Kāśyapa Matanga and Lokaraksha, Indians; An Shu Kao, a Parthian prince; and Ch'Yao, probably a Kushan.²

¹ See *E.R.E.*, IV. 838; *E.R.E.*, VIII. 235-6, 336; Farquhar, 116-7; Nariman, 89-94; Thomas, 211-27; and Keith, pp. 229, 230, 233, 254, 258, 261, 268, 307 (n. 4).

² See Farquhar, p. 118.

SECTION FOUR

The Period from A.D. 200 to 526, when the Patriarch of Indian Buddhism, Bodhidharma, left India and migrated to China¹

CHAPTER NINE

A Period of Expansion for Hinayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism

THE PERIOD under review was one in which the philosophies of the various religions of India found their best possible expression in books and commentaries. At the same time religious sects were being multiplied, and were becoming increasingly attractive to the common people. This was true of the Hindus, Buddhists, and Jains alike.

As Farquhar has pointed out, the history of India during the third century is a blank. The Guptas, however, arose in A.D. 320, and created an empire which gave North India a century and a half of strong, enlightened government. This provided the natural atmosphere and environment in which religious literature could grow, and religious culture come to its highest state. It was during this period that many of the greatest religious books were produced.

The author of the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* flourished about the beginning of the fourth century. His name is given as Ishvara (Iśvara) Krishna, but he was also known to the Chinese as Vindhavāsin. It is also probable that the Syrian Christian Church in Malabar came into existence during the period we are considering.²

At the same time Buddhism, both Mahāyāna and Hinayāna,

¹ See Hackmann, p. 80.

² See Farquhar, pp. 122, 123, 129.

reached its highest point of strength and splendour. The Hinayāna sects were carrying on a vigorous and successful propaganda in China and in Central Asia. A great deal of their literature was being translated for the use of foreign converts, especially into Chinese. For example, the *Vinaya* texts of four Hinayāna Schools were translated into Chinese within a period of twenty years A.D. 404-24. The Sarvāstivādins, in their various branches, were the most vigorous and influential, but the other sects were by no means inactive.¹

In Ceylon the monks of the Theravādin School were full of enthusiasm and vigour. They secured as many sacred books and commentaries as possible from India, and translated them into Sinhalese. Soon, however, they began to write for themselves in Pāli, and were so successful, that the fourth and fifth centuries cover the most brilliant period of Pāli literary activity in Ceylon.

The greatest of these Pāli scholars and writers was Buddhaghosha. Originally a Brāhman, and a great Hindu scholar, he became a convert to Hinayāna Buddhism, and settled in Ceylon, in the first half of the fifth century A.D. With incredible ability he mastered the *Pitakas*, the commentaries, and all the accumulated learning of the Ceylon monasteries, and began to write in Pāli with an ease and brilliance never seen before.

His first work was the *Visuddhimagga*, or *Path of Purity*. Into this book he condensed the whole system of Buddhism. It quickly became and remains a classic unsurpassed in Buddhist literature. He then proceeded to write a series of great commentaries on the chief books of the *Pāli Canon*. It is interesting to note in these books the growth of Buddha *bhakti*, or devotion to the Buddha, who is no longer regarded just as a great teacher, but as a semi-divine being with super-human powers, on the lines of the early Mahāyāna teaching.

¹ See Farquhar, pp. 155-6.

Teachers of Mahāyāna Buddhism were also very active during this period. Āryadeva, a younger contemporary of Nāgārjuna, forms a link between this period and the one we have been considering. He was writing and teaching during the first half of the third century, and was held in high regard both by his contemporaries and later generations, but his works have only come down to us in fragments, with the exception of his *Svādhishthāna-prabheda*, which has recently been found in Nepal. He appears to have held that mind, or thought, is the one true reality, and that all else is void.

The most important of all the *sūtras* of the Mahayana are the *Prajñāpāramitās*. These are called *sūtras* because they are attributed to the Buddha, and so have absolute authority. They deal with the six *pāramitās*, or perfections, of a Bodhisattva: generosity, performance of duty, gentleness, intrepidity, meditation, and wisdom—but chiefly with the highest perfection, *prajñā*, wisdom, which is knowledge of the doctrine of nothingness (the void), the denial not only of Being but also of Not-being.

There are five large recensions of the *pāramitās*—in 100,000, 25,000, 18,000, 10,000, and 8,000 verses respectively. Some of these *sūtras* may have been very early, for example, one of 10,000 verses existed in Chinese by A.D. 179.¹ They were evidently written to give authority to doctrines already taught. In all probability they originated among the Sarvāstivādins, and they all teach the doctrine of the void in a crude and dogmatic form.

The doctrine can best be studied in two of the shorter forms, the *Vajracchedikā* and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, the *Perfection of Wisdom*, in 8,000 verses.

The *Vajracchedikā* (Diamond-cutter), which probably belongs to our period, was translated into Chinese in A.D. 401.

¹ See Keith, p. 224.

This *sūtra* teaches that no particular thing is real—at every moment it is passing into something else. Things are only *apparently* real; they are actually *Māyā*, illusion, as unreal as the illusion produced by the magician or conjurer of things apparently real. Still, it so far recognizes the phenomenal world as to admit the relative truth of things, but denies the *reality* of everything, even the doctrine of the Buddha, and the Buddha himself.

This *sūtra* was widely used as a text-book and was very popular. A complete manuscript of the original Sanskrit text, and the manuscript of the old Khotanese version, have been found in Khotan by Sir Aurel Stein.¹

The *Ashtasāhasrikā* teaches that thought, even the thought of the Perfection of Wisdom, is non-thought, and in the state of non-thought there is neither existence nor non-existence—all things are void, and the void is imperishable. Briefly, the gist of the whole of the *pāramitās* amounts to nothing but the vacuity of phenomena. They were written to convince men of the non-reality of everything deemed by the common mind to be reality.

It is suggested that this points to an absolute, but it is an absolute which cannot be defined or even imagined. Imagination is especially condemned. The pure thought, which is non-thought, must at all costs be kept free from imagination which is essentially impure. The *real* is empty-thought—thought without any content. *Prajñā*, or wisdom, which is the supreme excellence, consists in the recognition of the *śūnyavāda*, or negativism, which declares everything to be 'void', and has for the reply to every question a 'No'.²

There is also another famous Mādhyamaka work on the ten

¹ See Thomas, pp. 214, 215.

² See *E.R.E.*, I. 95b; II. 739a; IV. 837b; VIII. 88b, 335ab, 336; X. 153b-4a; Thomas, pp. 212-18, 285; Farquhar, pp. 159-160; and Nariman, pp. 86-8.

stages (*bhūmis*) of the career of the Bodhisattva, called *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, on which Vasubandhu wrote a commentary. It was originally a chapter of the *Gandavyūha* (or *Buddhāvatamīsaka*), which is devoted to the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.¹ Thomas² says that the *Daśabhūmika* contains the fullest Mahāyāna statement of the Bodhisattva doctrine.

The *Lankāvatāra* also belongs to our period. Its actual date is unknown, but it was translated first into Chinese by Bhumibhadia (A.D. 443), then by Bodhiruchi (A.D. 513), and lastly by Shikshanānda (A.D. 700-4).³

This *sūtra* is supposed to be a discourse delivered by the Buddha to the demon Rāvana, Lord of Lanka (Ceylon). The ten stages of the Bodhisattva are described in harmony with the theories accepted by the Mādhyamaka and the Vijñānavāda Schools of Mahāyāna.

The doctrinal importance of the *Lankāvatāra* can scarcely be exaggerated. The teaching is Vijñānavādin. The belief in the self and in the external world is mere imagination. Nothing exists but thought. Things are nothing but mental creations. The only reality is mind without any differentiation, which is called 'Store-consciousness' (*ālaya-vijñāna*).

This 'Store-consciousness' is conceived as the one reality beyond all differentiation, the absolute, which is beyond the reach of thought. All else is illusion.⁴ Farquhar⁵ suggests that this *sūtra* seems to go beyond Asanga and to draw near to the teaching of the *Vedānta* that the human soul is God.

Another famous *Prajñā* text is the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛidaya-sūtra*, which also seems to belong to our period. In ancient times it was greatly valued and widely studied, and still is, but, unfortunately, its metaphysics degenerate into magical formulas. The *hṛidaya*, or heart of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, has

¹ See *E.R.E.*, I. 95.

² See Nariman, p. 309.

³ p. 161.

² See Thomas, pp. 204-10.

⁴ See Thomas, pp. 230-5.

become a mere *mantra*, or charm, to assuage all pains, and to preserve one safe against all calamities.

The *Vajracchedikā* and the *Hṛidaya* are the chief texts of the Shin-gon sect in Japan, and the Sanskrit text on palm leaves of the *Hṛidaya* has been preserved in the ancient cloister of Horiuzi in Japan since A.D. 609.¹

¹ See Nariman, p. 116.

CHAPTER TEN

Asanga (or Āryasanga), founder of the Vijñānavāda or Yogācāra School

WE HAVE already observed that all the most striking advances in Mahāyāna thought must be credited to individual teachers, and we have now to consider the influence upon the development of Mahāyāna of another great man, Asanga, who founded one of the most famous schools of Buddhist thought and practice, the Vijñānavāda or Yogācāra School.

Asanga, like nearly all eminent Buddhist thinkers and leaders, was originally a Brāhman. He was the eldest of three brothers born of the Kausika family in Puruṣapura (Peshawar) in the north of India. All these brothers were at first known by the name Vasubandhu. Later on the eldest acquired a new name, Asanga.

All three brothers were converted from Brāhmanism to the Sarvāstivādin School of Hīnayāna. The second brother continued to be known throughout his life by the common name Vasubandhu. He, too, became a famous teacher of Buddhism, first of Hīnayāna, and then of Mahāyāna. Though his life and work touch those of his brother Asanga at many points, it will be more convenient to deal with each of these renowned teachers separately. The third and youngest brother does not appear to have done or taught anything worthy of notice, therefore he need not detain us.

We are indebted for practically all we know of the lives of these teachers to records left by Paramartha (sixth century), Yuan Chwang (Hiuen-Tsiang) (seventh century), I-Tsing (seventh century), and Tāranātha (sixteenth century).

Asanga, the eldest brother, was the first to pass over from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is related that he tried

again and again to comprehend the doctrine of the 'void', but this profound conception evaded him, and, in his disappointment and despair, he determined to kill himself. Fortunately, at that critical moment, the Ārhat Pindola arrived from the mythical island, Pūrva-Videha, and taught him the Hinayāna doctrine.

This, however, did not satisfy Asanga, who, by his magic power, during the night, ascended to the Tushita heaven to the palace of Maitreya, the future Buddha, who made him understand the doctrine of the 'void', and gave him power to comprehend all mysteries. Thenceforth he was known as Asanga (he who is without attachment).

We are told that, later on, at Asanga's request, Maitreya came down to earth and, in the course of four months, recited the *Yogācārabhūmi-sāstra*, which is the foundation text of Asanga's system, and which survives only in Chinese, and is the chief scripture of the Shin-gon sect of Japan. But tradition claims that Maitreya, during this period, also dictated the *Alamkāra* and the *Madhyānta-Vibhañgha-sūtras* to Asanga.¹

Thomas, however, following Professor H. Ui, suggests that the Maitreya here referred to was not the future Buddha, but a human teacher called Maitreya.²

One chapter, called *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, was used as a separate work, and still survives in Sanskrit. It deals with the stages of the Bodhisattva career, and is thus the Vijñānavādin work corresponding to the Mādhyamaka *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*. In order to attain supreme wisdom (*bodhi*) it is necessary to become a Bodhisattva under the Mahāyāna, and practise yogācāra through all the *bhūmis* (stages) of the Bodhisattva career.

Asanga's system from the standpoint of philosophy is called *Vijñānavāda* ('Thought-system'), a system of subjective

¹ See Beal, *Life of Hiuen-Tsiang*, pp. 85-6.

² See 'History,' p. 238 n.

idealism. But from the practical standpoint it is called *Yogācāra* ('Yoga-practice'). For Asanga the only absolute entity is *bodhi* ('Wisdom'), which is manifested in the Buddhas, and is attainable solely by those who practise *yoga* in the ten stages as Bodhisattvas through countless existences.¹

Briefly, Asanga's system is this: the external world is illusion, only thought exists. Even this definition needs to be carefully guarded for thoughts have only a phenomenal existence: thoughts are really non-thoughts. The only reality, as we have seen, is the universal *bodhi*, which is held and manifested by all the Buddhas.

But what is meant by 'illusion'? 'Illusion in human life is said to consist in regarding the objectification of one's own mind as a world independent of that mind, which is really its source. To get rid of this fundamental illusion we must study the true nature of our mind and its objectification.'

'Asanga terms the mind the *ālaya*, i.e. abode or *nidus* where all things, both subjective and objective, are latent, and whence they are projected and manifested. The *ālaya* contains the seed (*bija*) from which all the illusions of existence spring.'²

Keith points out that the parallel between the Vedāntic absolutism and Mahāyāna tenets is striking and undeniable. In the *Vijñānavāda* we have definitely the conception of void intellect as the final reality, and though the Vedāntic absolute is *being*, *Brahman*, its existence is clearly on a par with the existence of the void intellect in *Vijñānavāda*. We have the famous utterance of the Buddha: 'This threefold world is only thought', which is equivalent to the doctrine of the Upanishads: 'Verily all this universe is Brahman.'³

Another work of Asanga's, the *Mahāyāna-sūtra-lamkāra*, which is also attributed to Maitreya, consists of a set of *kārikās*, or memorial verses, accompanied by a prose com-

¹ See *E.R.E.*, VIII. 88-9.

² See *E.R.E.*, II. 62.

³ See Keith, pp. 260-2.

mentary, the commentary as well as the text being by Asanga. It is a clear systematic statement of his philosophy.

So far as the ancient Scriptures are concerned, Asanga appears to have depended chiefly on the *Sanyukta Āgama*, but he also drew upon the *Anguttara* freely. 'Sylvain Levi holds that Asanga was influenced by the currents of foreign religious beliefs, having come into contact with the professors of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Manichæism.'¹

Undoubtedly some of the other works attributed to Asanga are authentic. The famous text-book, *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda-śāstra*, attributed to Aśvaghosha, seems to teach Asanga's system, and may have been written by him.

Asanga was to the *Vijñānavāda* or *Yogācāra* School of Mahāyāna Buddhism what Nāgārjuna was to the Mādhyamaka School. He taught a doctrine that nothing exists outside our consciousness, which repudiates *śūnyavāda*, or the doctrine of the *void*, equally with the reality of the phenomenal world.

But Asanga has no more claim to be regarded as the creator of the *Vijñānavāda* than Nāgārjuna of the *Mādhyamaka* School. Both these teachers systematized and rationalized teachings which were already current in their days, and both were indebted to the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*, some of which were certainly older than these teachers.

It is probable that Asanga was indebted to Āryadeva, who, as we have seen, held that mind was the only reality.²

If we knew that the *Lankāvatāra sūtra* was earlier than or contemporary with Asanga, and that he was familiar with it, we should be in a better position to judge the value of Asanga's contribution to the *Vijñānavāda* School of thought. At present, however, we can get no nearer to the date of this most important *sūtra* than the fact that it was translated into Chinese as early as A.D. 443.³

¹ See Nariman, p. 315.

² See Chap. 9, para. 8, *supra*.

³ See Chap. 9, para. 17, *supra*.

The *Lankāvatāra* is regarded as the very 'word of the Buddha', and so has absolute authority. All that is essential in the *Vijñānavāda* idealism is found in this *sūtra*.¹

If Professor H. Ui's view is accepted, Maitreya, an older contemporary of Asanga, originated the system and wrote or dictated the key books, while Asanga merely popularized them.²

Paramartha is said to have imported from Magadha to China the works of Asanga and Vasubandhu in the year A.D. 539.³

¹ See Chap. 9, para. 19, *supra*.

² See Chap. 10, para. 7, *supra*.

³ See Nariman, p. 97.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Vasubandhu, a great authority on Hinayāna and Mahāyāna

VASUBANDHU was a real genius, distinguished both for his profound knowledge of Buddhism, and for his great powers of philosophic thought. He has the distinction of having written authoritative works representing both the great divisions of Buddhism.

He had an open mind and was ready to consider new truths or new aspects of truth. During his lifetime he passed from Brāhmanism through the Hinayāna School of Buddhism into Mahāyāna Idealism, and, toward the end of his life, he came to believe in Amitābha, and the doctrine of salvation by grace, and was looking forward to rebirth in the Land of Bliss.

Vasubandhu, as we have already seen,¹ was born of Brāhman parents at Puruṣapura (Peshawar) in Gandhāra (Kandahar), and is said to have been a contemporary of Vikramaditya (=Skandagupta, A.D. 355-80). His traditional dates are given as c. A.D. 420-500, but fresh evidence, which has become available through the investigations of Péri, has led some scholars to conclude that his death could not have been later than A.D. 350, and that he was probably born about A.D. 270.²

After his conversion from Brāhmanism to the Sarvāstivādin School of Buddhism, he studied the whole of the *Tripiṭaka* of the Sarvāstivādins under their great scholar Buddhamitra.

The philosophers of Hinayāna Buddhism were divided into two Schools: (1) the *Vaibhāshikas*, who accepted the *Abhidharma* books of the Sarvāstivādins (the seven *Abhidharmas*)

¹ Chap. 10, para. 2, *supra*.

² See Keith, p. 155, 232, n. 1.

as the 'very word of the Buddha', and the commentary on them, *Vibhāshā*, as the oldest and most authoritative 'treatise' (*śastra*); (2) the *Sautrāntikas*, who considered the seven books simply as 'treatises' (*śastra*) of human inspiration, and therefore liable to error, and who maintained that the genuine *Abhidharma* were contained in certain *sūtras*, the *Artha-vinischaya*, etc., which they regarded as 'the Basket of *Abhidharma*'. Hence their name, *Sautrāntikas*, the philosophers who recognize the authority of the *Sūtrāntas* alone.

The Sarvāstivādin doctrine is realistic and teaches a direct perception of external objects: the eye actually sees, but the consciousness (*vijñāna*) discerns. The *Sautrāntikas* also accepted the reality of the external world, but asserted an indirect perception without the aid of sense organs, instead of a direct one. They hold the self to be self-conscious, conscious directly of self, and indirectly of other things, whose existence could only be inferred. Their theory of the self, founded on the original Buddhist conception of psychical life,¹ formed a stepping-stone from the phenomenalist position to the Mahāyāna Philosophy of Vacuity.

'The self, they argued, is a long series (*santāna*) of phenomenal elements, each member of which exists only for a moment so infinitesimal that its apparition and destruction may be said to be simultaneous. Each momentary member (*kṣaṇa*) of the series is both an effect and a cause, yet possesses no real activity. Birth, existence, old age, death, are illusions; for the series is uncreated, uninterrupted. Thus there is no identity, no continuous existence.'²

After Vasubandhu had mastered the books and doctrines of the Sarvāstivādins, he turned his attention to the *Sautrāntikas*, and studied their doctrines under the guidance of their

¹ See *Hīnayāna*, pp. 76-8.

² See Farquhar, p. 106, *Hīnayāna*, pp. 78-9, and Chap. 5, paras. 3-8, *supra*.

most distinguished teacher, Sanghabhadra. He was attracted by these doctrines, and considered them in some respects more reasonable than the doctrines of the Vaibhāshikas.

However, the realistic speculations of neither School completely satisfied him, but they probably prepared him for the second stage of his philosophical development, his conversion to the subjective idealism of Mahāyāna.

One of the great objects of Asanga's life was to win over his brother from Hinayāna to Mahāyāna. He worked out his plan in every detail with imagination and supreme subtlety. He arranged a meeting-place with his brother at Ayodhyā (Oudh) in the monastery of the mango-trees.

In the evening he led Vasubandhu to a terrace on the bank of the river and left him alone there. It was a beautiful autumn night, and the moon was bathing the river and the surrounding country in a ghostly light. The silence of the night was broken only by the occasional cries of birds and beasts and the croaking of bull-frogs, but these sounds tended to intensify the silence and the sense of aloneness.

Vasubandhu appears to have been hypnotized by his surroundings, as Asanga intended him to be. The world seemed unreal and life but the dream of a dream. This sense of unreality became more profound when a disciple of Asanga, hidden away out of sight, began to read in a sweet voice selections from Asanga's idealism. These fitted in so perfectly with his dreamy state and unreal surroundings that he was stirred to the pitch of ecstasy, and fully realized the unreality of all material things, and the truth and beauty of Mahāyāna.

Suddenly remembering that he had been an opponent of the supreme truth, he was about to tear out his tongue which had spoken against the great doctrine. His brother, however, who was concealed close by, rushed out and prevented him, saying that it would be much better to use his tongue in the proclamation of the truth he had denied. The two brothers

thus united went forth together to spread the knowledge of Mahāyāna Idealism.¹

U. Wogihara suggests that toward the end of his life Vasubandhu reached a quite different phase of belief. He composed twenty-four verses entitled 'Longing for Birth' (in *Sukhāvatī*, i.e. the Western Paradise). These verses, with the commentary, are regarded as one work, and are called the *Aparimitāyus-sūtra-padesa*. This shows that he believed in the *Amitābha* (*alias* *Aparimitāyus*) doctrine, which has no connexion with either Hinayāna or Mahāyāna Idealism. In his earlier works even the name of *Amitābha* is not mentioned.²

Vasubandhu's most important work during his earlier—his Hinayāna—period was his *Abhidarmakośa* ('Repository of the Abhidharma'), which deals with the ethics, psychology, and metaphysics of Buddhism. This work is known to us only through Chinese and Tibetan translations and a Sanskrit commentary. The author brought to the writing of the book a wide and detailed knowledge of all the Schools and, being a man of real genius, he was able to gather into a harmonious synthesis all the great doctrines accepted generally by Buddhists.

So great was his success that the *Kośa* has been accepted as authoritative by all Schools of Buddhists, not only of the Hinayāna but also of the Mahāyāna. The Chinese and Japanese Mahāyānists still use it as a text-book.

Scholars are agreed that the *Abhidarmakośa*, together with Vasubandhu's own commentary (*bhāshya*) on it, and the super-commentary (*vyākhyā*) of Yasomitra, contain the fullest and most systematic exposition of *Abhidharma*.

It is said that the basis of Vasubandhu's great work was two commentaries on the *Abhidharma* of the Sarvāstivādins, the *Vibhāshā* and the *Mahāvibhāshā*. That these commentaries

¹ See Réné Grousset, *In the Footsteps of the Buddha*, pp. 131-2.

² See E.R.E., XII. 596.

really existed is proved by the fact that Chinese translations of them exist to this day.

That they were early we may confidently believe, and that they were written in Sanskrit. They may have been as early as the first century B.C. Moreover, their existence implies that the *Sarvāstivādin Canon* had already been committed to writing. The *Vibhāshās*, as we have seen, were especially studied by the Sarvāstivādins of Kashmir (or Kaśmir), hence their name of *Vaibhāshikas*.

We must not overlook the fact, however, that though Vasubandhu sets out to state the views of the *Vaibhāshikas*, in his commentary on the *Kośa* he criticizes them, and in some ways supports the views of the *Sauitrāntikas*. He was not a rigid disciple of any School.¹

After his conversion to *Mahāyāna* he adopted the subjective idealism of his brother Asanga, which he completed and systematized in his famous *Vijñaptimātratā-triṃśaka* (Thirty Verses on 'Mere Idea').

The philosophical school based on this treatise teaches that all phenomena, both material and non-material, originate in mind. If we once fully understood that nothing else exists but mind, then the objective world would cease to exist for us. According to this theory, only enlightened wisdom (*jñāna*) exists, by means of which we can unite in the *tathatā* ('thusness') which transcends speech and thought.²

Vasubandhu also composed a number of commentaries on various *Mahāyāna sūtras*, which have, however, been preserved in Chinese and Tibetan translations only.

Late in life he composed the *Aparamitāyus-sūtra-śāstra*, which, Farquhar says, sums up the texts of the Paradise *Mahāyāna*. M. Anesaki tells us³ that Vasubandhu opens his commentary on the *Sukhāvatīvyūhā* with a prayer to Amitābha.

¹ See *E.R.E.*, XI. 213-14.

³ *E.R.E.*, X. 169.

² See *E.R.E.*, XII. 595-6.

He prescribes the five methods of worship to those who desire the communion of the Land of Bliss: (1) Reverence shown by bodily acts of worship; (2) Adoration expressed in oral utterance; (3) Earnest thought. The threefold thought in devotion is faithful thought, profound thought, and the thought to attain the final bliss by dedicating all good to that end;¹ (4) Intent thought to visualize the Buddha and his land; (5) Dedication of all goodwill and works to the welfare of fellow beings.

Vasubandhu was a docetist. He accepted in its completeness the Buddhist doctrine of the Trinity. Each Buddha has three bodies: (1) the *dharmakāya*, or body consisting of the law, which, for the Mādhyamaka, was equal to the *void*, and for the Vijñānavādin was equal to *pure idea* which transcends speech and thought; (2) the *sambhogakāya*, or body of bliss, which he wears ever in his supramundane state, and (3) *nirmānakāya*, the magical body, which he wore on earth, and which men took to be a real body. M. Anesaki says: 'Vasubandhu was such a thorough-going gnostic that he almost loses sight of a definite incarnation such as Śākyamuni, and believes in innumerable condescension bodies (which he calls apparitions, *nirmita*) appearing everywhere in any form, in the visions of the Bodhisattvas.

'Mysticism, Theosophy, Gnosticism, and Pantheism are combined in his docetic Buddhology, which at last amounts to nothing else than Cosmology and Psychology.'²

That is to say, the Buddha is identical with the universe, which is pure undifferential thought, or *tathatā*, which the mind can neither define nor grasp.

There seems to be little practical difference between Nāgārjuna's doctrine of the *void*, and Asanga's and Vasubandhu's doctrine of *mere idea*, since both end in *nothingness*. Nariman

¹ See *S.B.E.*, XLIX, Part 2, p. 188.

² See *E.R.E.*, IV. 839-40; and Farquhar, p. 159.

may well exclaim: 'It seems to be the curse of Indian mentality that whenever it soars too high it lands itself in absurdity. Thus the legends of sacrifice often turn into ludicrous tales, and so does the whole fabric of the philosophy of Mahāyāna end in—Nothing.'¹

He has immediately in mind the concluding passage in the ninth chapter of Sāntideva's great book, *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, which means admission to the Bodhi life. Concerning this he speaks as follows: 'Still it is sufficiently strange that after all the teaching of active compassion the poet comes to the conclusion, "Since all being is so vacuous and null, what can, what shall be acquired? Who can be honoured, who can be reproached? How can there be joy and sorrow, the loved and the hateful, avarice and non-avarice? Wherever you search for them you find them not."'²

There is no suggestion that Vasubandhu lost faith in his philosophy, but we are not surprised that toward the end of his life he looked forward eagerly to happiness in the Paradise of Sukhāvatī, by the grace of Amitābha.

He died at Ayodhyā at the age of eighty. He led a secular life, and his character is baffling and hard to understand. He was truly great, however, both as a man and a philosopher.

In conclusion, our period was noted for the very large number of texts, both Hinayāna and Mahāyāna, translated into Chinese. The earlier translators had been, for the most part, foreigners, but now Chinese translators took an ever-increasing share in the work. Hackmann points out that it was not until the fourth century A.D. that the Chinese were allowed to become Buddhist monks, but from this time Buddhism took a strong hold on China.

The Chinese Buddhists were no longer content to receive knowledge of their religion from foreigners, but they themselves made pilgrimages to the sacred land of Buddhism, and

¹ See Nariman, pp. 108-9.

See *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.

returned home laden with books, relics, and pictures. The most renowned of these pilgrims were Fa Hsien (or Fa-hian), whose journey took place in A.D. 399-413; Yuan Chwang's (or Hiuen-Tsiang's), A.D. 629-45; I-Tsing's (or I-ching's), A.D. 671-95. Sung Yün also, a layman, was sent to India in the year A.D. 518.¹

This enthusiasm for Buddhism in China led the Emperor to order a collection of Chinese Buddhist texts to be made in A.D. 518, and in 520 a list of the books in the *Tripiṭaka* as translated was drawn up, and still survives. The climax was reached in A.D. 526, when the Patriarch of Indian Buddhism, Bodhidharma, left India and migrated to China, which then became the new centre of Buddhism.

Though sacred texts of all the Schools were translated into Chinese, the *Mahāyāna* School became and is still the dominant Buddhist influence in China.²

¹ See Hackmann, pp. 78, 79, n. 1.

² See *ibid.*, pp. 80-1, and Farquhar, pp. 161-2.

SECTION FIVE

The Period of the Degeneration of Buddhism, from about A.D. 550-900

CHAPTER TWELVE

Certain Distinguished Teachers and Writers, especially Chandrakirti, Śāntideva, and Chandragomin

FROM ABOUT the beginning of this period a new element became prominent in Indian Religion, both Hindu and Buddhist, the exaltation and adoration of goddesses. The Jains, however, firmly rejected this worship, and kept themselves almost entirely free from the poison of Śāktism.

The sects also became more highly organized than ever before. This was also a period of intense missionary activity, during which both Hinduism and Buddhism reached Cambodia, Sumatra, and Java. In the sixth century Buddhism was carried to Japan, and in the seventh it reached Tibet. It was a time of great activity and change.¹

About the beginning of the eighth century a company of Persian Zoroastrians, fleeing from their Muslim persecutors, found a refuge in India. Their descendants are the Parsis, whose headquarters are in Bombay.²

Asanga and Vasubandhu were the last of the great creative thinkers of Buddhism, though both Hinayāna and Mahāyāna continued to produce distinguished scholars and teachers, whose text-books and commentaries were a valuable contribution to Buddhist scholarship.

The ancient monastery of Nālandā, which lies north-east

¹ See *Hinayāna*, pp. 121-2.

² See Farquhar, pp. 167-8.

of Budh-Gayā, in Behar, developed, about the beginning of this period, into a great Buddhist University, where thousands of students and teachers of all the Schools, both Hinayāna and Mahāyāna, taught, disputed, and wrote.¹

Farquhar says that it is possible to trace, from about A.D. 600-850, a succession of scholars, especially in the Mādhyamaka and Vijñānavādin Schools. Manuals of both these philosophies poured in a continuous stream from Nālandā, and many of them were translated into Chinese and Tibetan.²

The Mādhyamaka School produced two great teachers during this period, Chandrakīrti, who lived in the first half of the seventh century, and Śāntideva, about the middle of that century.

Chandrakīrti was a distinguished compiler and commentator. His commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Kārikās*, called *Prasannapādā*, is famous;³ while his *Mādhyamakāvatāra* is a summary of the whole doctrine of the Mahāyāna, and especially of the Mādhyamaka System. Unfortunately it is preserved only in the Tibetan translation.

Śāntideva wrote three works: the *Śikshāsamuccaya* (Collection of rules and instructions), the *Sūtrasamuccaya*, and the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. The most important are the first and the last.

The *Śikshāsamuccaya* is a manual of Mahāyāna teaching according to the Mādhyamaka School. It consists of a poem of twenty-seven memorial verses (*kārikās*), and a voluminous commentary upon them, which is made up very largely of extracts from the Mahāyāna Scriptures. It is a book of moral rules for the Bodhisattva who has made the vow and is

¹ For an excellent description of Nālandā, founded both on history and archaeological surveys, see Réné Grousset, *In the Footsteps of the Buddha*, pp. 165-6.

² See Farquhar, p. 208.

³ See Chap. 8, *supra*.

beginning the training. The work displays an extraordinary erudition, and vast reading, but little originality.

It is, however, very valuable, because it contains many and often large citations from texts which have since perished, and we are entirely dependent for our knowledge of them to this book. Śāntideva, moreover, is a reliable scholar, and his quotations where we can check them are very exact. This gives us confidence to believe that his other citations are equally worthy of trust.

The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* ('entrance into training for enlightenment') is a poem of great literary merit, and of deep religious feeling. In contrast with the former work, this book shows real originality, and not seldom rises to the loftiest strains of religious poetry.

In both these texts the moral ideal of the Bodhisattva is set forth. He who would attain to enlightenment must have boundless compassion for all creatures, must continually adore the Buddha, and must be convinced that supreme wisdom consists in the perception that all is void, *śūnyatā*.

The Bodhisattva must not shrink from any suffering required for the enlightenment of himself, or for the ultimate salvation of all other creatures. He must be willing, if needs be, to take upon himself the sufferings of the damned, and to endure in hells for untold ages the tortures due to them. To quote Śāntideva's own words: 'I have made up my mind to abide for interminable myriads of æons on the spots of torture. And why so? Because it is better that I alone should suffer, than that all these creatures should sink into the state of torment. I deliver myself up as a pledge.'

But all this will not avail unless the doctrine of vacuity is thoroughly grasped. Śāntideva was convinced that none of the beautiful things he advocated do really exist. They are just nothing at all. All compassion, morality, patience, energy, concentration must be permeated by the essential

intuition of nothingness; otherwise these virtues are blind and unavailing.

The gift to be valid must fulfil the following three conditions—recognition of the non-existence of the gift itself, of the giver, and of the recipient. The illusion of existence must be kept up, but existence must never be acknowledged as real.

Śāntideva also believed firmly in the efficacy of *dhāranīs*, or magic spells. For example, he praises without reservation the use of *dhāranīs* for the pardon of sins. We shall have to return to our study of Śāntideva's teaching at a later stage of our inquiry, because he is a front-rank authority on Bodhi-sattvas.

Chandragomin was the chief scholar of the Vijñānavāda School. He lived early in the seventh century, and was a contemporary and rival of Chandrakīrti. He was still alive at the time of I-Tsing's visit to India in 673. He was a poet, a grammarian, and a logician. Two of his works have been preserved in Sanskrit: the *Śishyalekhadharma-kāvya*, in which the Buddhist doctrine is propounded in the elegant style of *Kāvya*, and his Grammar. His logic is preserved in Tibetan.

There are many legends about him, in which he is said to have composed innumerable hymns and learned works, but we have very little reliable information. He is also reputed to have been a great adorer of the goddess Tārā, the Saviour, the female counterpart of Avalokiteśvara. It is claimed that no less than ninety-six texts were written in honour of Tārā. Of these only sixty-two are preserved in the Tibetan translation.¹

¹ See Nariman, pp. 100-12.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The *Tantras*: The Śāktas, Worshippers of Goddesses

WE MUST now consider, in some detail, this new movement in Hinduism and Buddhism—the Śākta movement—which led to very serious moral degeneration in both these religions.

The Śāktas are worshippers of the goddess, rather than the god; in Hinduism most frequently of Kāli or Durgā, the *sakti*, that is to say, the energy of Śiva, to the neglect of Śiva himself, though some worship Lakshmī, the *sakti* of Viśṇu.

The Śāktas are divided into Right-hand Śāktas and Left-hand Śāktas. The Right-hand Śāktas are considered to be quite respectable in Hindu Society, and are scarcely distinguished from other Hindus, except that they worship the goddess rather than the god. The Left-hand Śāktas, on the other hand, practise their religion in secret, and few, if any, members of this sect would wish their connexion with it to be known.

The Hindu Śāktas believed that every god had a wife. The Buddhist Śāktas also held the view that every Buddha and Bodhisattva had a female consort, his *sakti*, his energy. The theory is that the gods, the Buddhas, and the Bodhisattvas are quiescent and inert, but their wives are wide-awake and active. It follows, therefore, that only through their consorts can men come into actual and living union with these divine beings.

The full system appears in the *Tantras*, the literature of the Śāktas. Hundreds of *Tantras* are mentioned in the ancient lists, and some of these books have survived until the present day. Tāraṇātha, the Tibetan historian, states that the Buddhist *Tantras* were first written in the sixth century, and he may well be right. The *Tathāgataguhyaka*, a perfect

specimen of this class, must belong to the first half of the seventh century, for it is already quoted by Śāntideva in the middle of that century, and there are other books which cannot be later than the latter half of the seventh century. Śāktism in Buddhism does not differ materially from Śāktism in Hinduism; indeed, they are practically identical.¹

The *Tantras* treat partly of rites and ordinances, and partly of secret doctrine, *Yogatāntra*, intended for the *yogi*. But the majority of the *Tantras* belong to the latter class. These treatises, indeed, are derived from the mysticism of the *Mādhyamaka* and *Yogācāra* schools of *Mahāyāna*.

What the Buddhist *yogi* endeavours to arrive at is the supreme knowledge of the Nullity or *Śūnyatā*. He does this by means of asceticism and meditation, but also with the help of necromantic exercises and adjurations, hypnotism, and physical excitements, such as the use of meat, and intoxicants, as well as sexual excesses—things forbidden in orthodox *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

Nariman says that in these texts there is left next to nothing of Buddhism, though the claim is made that they were 'enunciated by the Buddha'. It is idle to seek sense or rationality in these books. Nevertheless, they have had great influence in Northern India, and especially in Nepal.

Tantric Buddhism was also introduced into Tibet where it easily united with the terrible native cults and rendered Buddhism acceptable to the people.² Later on, Tantric Buddhism became a powerful influence in China and Japan. Indeed, in Japan the *Shin-gon* sect is based on Tantric texts.³

We cannot attempt a detailed discussion of the new Śākta cult here, but must refer the reader for fuller information to the authorities quoted. It is necessary, however, to describe the heart of the system, which is called *Chakra-pūjā*, Circle Worship.

¹ See *E.R.E.*, XII. 193-7.

³ See Nariman, pp. 117-22.

² See *Hinayāna*, p. 124.

An equal number of men and women devotees meet in secret, usually at night, and sit in a circle. The goddess to be worshipped may be represented by an image or a drawing of the *yoni*, the female organ of generation, or by a naked woman, usually the wife of the priest, but always the object of worship is the *yoni*.

The liturgy of the cult consists in the repetition of *mantras* (spells), charms, and so on; the ritual in partaking of the five *tattvas* (i.e. elements), viz. wine, meat, fish, parched grain, and sexual intercourse.

Left-hand Śāktism, even now, is widely practised in India.¹ The modern ritual is performed in secret, as in ancient times, and is practically identical with that of the Tantras. 'The nude female figure is still the object of veneration by both sexes, and the *yoni*, and all it stands for in facts as well as in allegory, the centre of attention.'

'The meetings are accompanied with intense ecstatic orgies, and the freest unions take place, devoid of the scruples of caste or blood relationships, and in theory, at any rate, the partakers cross the regions of darkness to actual union with the mighty Śiva.'²

How was such a movement possible in Buddhism, with which it seems on the surface to be entirely incompatible? Surface views of Buddhism are usually misleading, and should be carefully investigated.

Gautama Buddha and his early followers believed in all the Hindu gods of their age, and Buddhists in every generation have believed in Hindu gods and demons, and have honoured if not actually worshipped them. This is true of both Hīnayānists and Mahāyānists. Buddhists of all schools have also

¹ For details see *E.R.E.* Indexes, under *Śāktas*, *Śāktism*.

² See *The Underworld of India* (pp. 85-7), by Sir George MacMunn, and also *The Goal of India* (pp. 62-3 with footnotes, and p. 84), by W. E. S. Holland.

believed in the power of magic, both black and white, with their *mantras*, or spells, and have generally practised them. This is true even of the Buddhists of Ceylon, who are supposed to have preserved Buddhism in its purest form.¹

In the *Mahāyāna* all these beliefs and practices got the opportunity to grow and spread, because *Mahāyāna* grew increasingly nearer to Hinduism, until it became almost identified with it.

In fact, Buddhist Left-hand Śāktism is an adaptation of Śaivism and Śāktism. In addition to the three traditional bodies of the Buddha, Tantrism teaches that he has a fourth body, *vajrasattva*, the body of *vajra*. It is with that body that the eternal Buddha eternally embraces his Śakti, Tārā or Bhagavatī.

From this erotic conception of the nature of the divine being it follows that, in order to actualize his real divine nature, the ascetic must perform the rites of union with a woman (*yoginī*, *mudrā*) who is the personification of the *bhagavati*, who is Bhagavatī herself; as it is said, "Buddhahood abides in the female organ." This truth [it is claimed] was discovered by Śākyamuni, who conquered Buddhahood by practising the Tantric rites in the *harīm*.²

Though most Indians condemn Tantrism, it has a fervent defender in Mr. B. Bhattacharyya, an authority on the Buddhist *Tantras*, who declares, in his *Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism* (1932) that "the Tantric culture is the greatest of all cultures, because it aims at the spiritual perfection and psychic development of man, and as such no one can deny that the Tantric culture is the greatest contribution made by India toward the world's civilization."³

¹ See *Hinayāna*, pp. 125-9.

² For further information on this obscure subject, see *E.R.E.*, XII. 196-7, and Farquhar, pp. 271-5, 311.

³ See Thomas, p. 296.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Importance for Buddhism of the Chinese Pilgrims, and especially of Yuan Chwang (or Hiuen-Tsiang) and I-Tsing

WE ARE chiefly dependent for our accurate historical knowledge of Buddhism during this period (A.D. 550-900) to the writings of Chinese Pilgrims.

India has been called 'this land without memory, which scorns temporal memories, remembering only the visions of the unseen'. It is certainly true that Indians themselves had and have little sense of history. Fortunately for them and for us Greek residents in India compiled histories of the earlier days of Hinduism and Buddhism, especially the period before Christ, and early in the Christian Era, if not before, contact between India and China was established.

The Chinese, like the Greeks, had the historical sense, and were capable of recording both past events and contemporary happenings precisely as they heard and experienced them. These Chinese records inspire us with confidence: as we read them we feel that, in the main, they are reliable, as reliable, let us say, as first-rate modern books of travel.

Yuan Chwang (seven different ways of spelling this name have been noted) was the greatest of these Chinese pilgrims and historians. He was a man of good family, and was brought up in the pure Confucian tradition. While yet a young boy he amazed his father not only by his knowledge of Confucianism, but by his close observance of the rites. This deep grounding in Confucianism was very important for the future of Chinese Buddhism.

We have already remarked that practically all the great

creative thinkers of earlier Buddhism were converted Brāhmaṇ scholars; this is true of Mahāyāna as well as Hinayāna Buddhism. The stability of later Buddhism in the Far East was mainly due to the fact that all its greatest teachers and leaders were first of all Confucianist scholars like Yuan Chwang. The saying that every Chinese Buddhist is also a Confucianist is still probably true.

Through the influence of his elder brother, who had lately gone over to Buddhism, Yuan Chwang became a Buddhist, and was admitted in his early 'teens to the Monastery of Lo-yāng. At once he plunged into the study of Buddhist Philosophy with great enthusiasm and consummate ability.

Buddhism in China was already divided into many schools and sects, whose varied teachings presented strange discordances and contradictions. Yuan Chwang, who studied them all, inclined more and more to the *Yogācāra* (*Vijñāna-vāda*) or Idealistic School of Mahāyāna.

Yuan Chwang had determined in his own mind to visit India, where he would be able to study Buddhism under the guidance of its greatest living teachers, and some other young men to whom he made known his plan agreed to go with him. When, however, they sought permission from the Emperor he forbade them to leave the country. The others submitted, but Yuan Chwang would not be denied and, at the age of twenty-six, secretly stole out of China, and began his romantic and momentous pilgrimage.

We must resist the temptation to attempt to tell the story of his travels, one of the most remarkable pilgrimages ever undertaken by man, because we have space only for the most essential things. To begin with we are deeply impressed by the fact that all the way from China to India Yuan Chwang passed through countries in which Buddhism was either still professed or where its influence remained. This was true of all the States in the Gobi Desert, which was, in the seventh

century, one of the most highly civilized and prosperous regions of the world.

For example, in Turfān, a kingdom inhabited by Indo-Europeans, many of whom had red hair and blue-grey eyes, the king was a devout and enthusiastic Buddhist, and his people called themselves Buddhists; while at the town of Yen-Ch'i (the modern Qarashahr) he found ten monasteries and nearly two thousand monks, some of them Sanskrit scholars able to translate the sacred books into their native language. All these monks were Hinayānists of the Sarvāstivādin School. He had similar experiences in other States.

Even amongst the Western Turks, a people so far removed by both race and territory from India, there was a great reverence for Buddhism, though they themselves were not Buddhists but fire worshippers. These Turks treated the Buddhist pilgrim with great respect and kindness. For example, in Bactria (now called Tokharistan), which was at the time of his visit, in A.D. 630, in the possession of these Western Turks, he found about one hundred monasteries and some three thousand Hinayānist monks.

This had been a great stronghold of Buddhism until A.D. 425, when it was overrun by the Ephthalite Huns, a Mongol people, who with savage fury destroyed organized Buddhism and the Indo-Greek art which represented it. But the Huns in turn had been destroyed by the Western Turks who allowed the monks who had survived to follow their religion in peace.

The fierce, proud Afghans of Bāmiyān, a city of great importance on the road from Central Asia to India, were true Buddhists in the possession of ten monasteries in which dwelt several thousand Hinayānist monks.

At last, to his great joy, after crossing the Shībar Pass at an altitude of 9,000 feet, he realized that he was in India, the land of his dreams, at the town of Kapiśa, which had been one of

the capitals of the Greek State of Kabul, and later served as a summer residence for the great Indo-Scythian emperor Kanishka, who governed from there the whole of Eastern Iran, and the whole of North Western India.

The Turkish king of Kapiśa was a devout Buddhist, and he gave the pilgrim a warm welcome. Here Yuan Chwang met the first Jains, and the first Hindu Ascetics of his journey. Here also were Mahāyānist as well as Hinayānist monasteries.

One is surprised to learn that as late as the seventh century, about two hundred years after Asaṅga and Vasubandhu had founded the Idealistic School of Mahāyāna Buddhism, Hinayānist monks possessed a practical monopoly of the monasteries in all the countries Yuan Chwang had passed through between China and India. In fact, out of a total of 183,000 monks, according to the Mahāyānist Yuan Chwang, 32,000 only were Mahāyānist out and out, 96,000 Hinayānist, and 54,500 lived in monasteries where both faiths were studied, and the remaining 500 are not classified. The Mahāyānist monks lived almost entirely in India.¹

As Yuan Chwang penetrated more deeply into India he discovered that the people were divided between Buddhism and Hinduism, chiefly of the Śaiva sects. But everywhere Hinduism was advancing and Buddhism retreating. The Hindus were full of enthusiasm, but the Buddhists were for the most part apathetic.

This picture is in strong contrast to that painted by the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hsien, who visited India about A.D. 400. He states that Buddhism was the dominant religion everywhere in India, amongst all classes of the people from the princes to the peasants—Brāhmanism had been pushed into the background.

Nevertheless, the old philosophical religion of the Buddha had been transformed into a popular religion of festivals and

¹ See Keith, p. 158.

pompous processions—a religion of outward show—and magical elements already were prominent. Tantrism with its strongly marked sexual character had already appeared, and these corruptions were beginning to destroy the heart of Buddhism.

During the two hundred years that had elapsed between the visits of the two pilgrims this process of degeneration had continued with the result that Yuan Chwang saw signs of the eclipse of Buddhism everywhere.

For example, he visited Kapilavastu, the Buddha's native town. At this time the town was in ruins, as was the whole region round about. Only one monastery with thirty Hīnayānist monks remained out of a thousand monasteries the ruins of which were to be seen throughout the jungle. When he visited Pāṭiliputra (Patna), the capital of the ancient kingdom of Magadha, the real Holy Land of Buddhism, all that was to be seen of its ancient glory were the foundations of its hundreds of monasteries. Only two or three were still standing. This disappointing experience was repeated again and again.

He found many influential persons, including kings, who were patrons of Buddhism, such as Bhāskara Kumāra, the king of Kāmarūpa—the present Assam—who invited Yuan Chwang to spend some weeks at his court before returning to China. This king was a highly cultured ruler. Although a Hindu, he was deeply interested in Buddhism.

Yuan Chwang had a similar experience with Harsha, who reigned over almost the whole of Northern India, from the Brahmaputra to Gujarāt and the Vindhya Mountains. He was the last of the great Buddhist rulers, but he never broke with official Brāhmanism, nor even with the Hindu sects, any more than the other Indian sovereigns of his time. He was a worshipper of Śiva, but his personal sentiments were clearly Buddhist, and of the Mahāyāna School.

The king arranged for a public discussion on Buddhism

and Hinduism, to which he invited many thousands of Hindu and Buddhist priests and monks. It was his wish that in the course of this discussion Yuan Chwang should 'dissipate the blindness of the heretics of the Hinayāna', and 'shatter the overweening pride of the Brāhmans and Hindu sectarians'.

This public controversy aroused great anger and led to threats against Yuan Chwang, and to an attempt upon King Harsha's life. On the last day of the assembly, the tower the king had erected to house the image of the Buddha was burnt down. The Brāhman reaction was becoming more threatening every day. The triumph of Hinduism was at hand.

Four years later Harsha disappears, and his empire breaks up. Then fell the Muslim avalanche. Islām was on the point of destroying in this land the very memory of Graeco-Buddhist civilization. An enfeebled and Hinduized Buddhism disappeared from India, the land of its birth, but Hinduism, full of enthusiasm and reinvigorated by its recent revival, weathered the storm and survived.

After his visit to Harsha, Yuan Chwang returned to China by the land route and arrived there safely in the year A.D. 645. He had a great reception by an immense multitude of the common people, and by representatives of the Buddhist community, and of the Imperial Court. He suddenly awoke to the fact that he was famous in his own land.

He was also graciously received by the Emperor, T'ai-tsung the Great, who had conquered Central Asia, overwhelmed the Turks, and brought under control all the Indo-European towns of the Gobi. His name was feared throughout Asia, and distant rulers in India and elsewhere sought to win his goodwill and favour.

Yuan Chwang had brought back with him six hundred Sanskrit works. During his sojourn in India he had become a master of Sanskrit, and had had the advantage of studying Buddhism under some of its greatest living scholars.

He had spent several considerable periods in the great Buddhist university city of Nālandā—‘a city consisting of some ten monasteries within a brick enclosure, and comprising, along with the dwelling-places of the monks, a number of halls for meetings and prayer. The adherents of the eighteen sects were there, and all kinds of works were studied.’

Here he met Śīlabhadra, a very learned old man, whom he regarded as the ideal, the omniscient Master, who revealed to him the last secrets of the idealistic system of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. The outcome of this study was the *Siddhi*, the great philosophical treatise of Yuan Chwang, which is nothing less than the *Summa* of doctrine, the culmination of seven centuries of Indian thought, and a priceless treasure to the Sino-Japanese world.

The Master of the Law, as he was called, devoted himself to the translation of the Sanskrit books. He had actually the help of a large staff of translators well versed in Sanskrit. The first collection was finished in the autumn of A.D. 648, and presented to the Emperor.

In A.D. 664, just as he was finishing the translation of the Sanskrit book of the *Prajñāpāramitā* (‘the Perfection of Wisdom’), his strength failed him and he passed quietly away.

The reigning Emperor, Kao-tsung, mourned him, and had him buried with exceptional honours in the Convent of the Great Beneficence.

The pilgrimage of Yuan Chwang was far from being an isolated event. One of his contemporaries, a monk like himself, I-Tsing (634-713) has left us an account of the journeys accomplished during his time by the other ‘eminent monks who went to seek the Law in the countries of the West’—this is in India.

These tales make sad reading and contain many tragedies. The journey by land from China to India became increasingly difficult after the death of the great conqueror, T'ai-tsung.

His successors were weaker men, and the power and prestige of China quickly declined. Before long, to attempt to reach India by the land route was to court certain death.

The pilgrims, therefore, were compelled to go by sea. The sea route, too, was full of dangers, and many lost their lives on the voyage, and many others, who reached India, vanished without a trace. Many pilgrims were more interested in Ceylon than in India: they landed at Negapatam in South India, and from there went on to Ceylon. Sinhalese Buddhism had acquired great importance in the eyes of the Chinese, and Ceylon itself was a land of mystery and magic, closely associated with the Buddha himself. One great attraction was the Buddha's tooth, a most sacred relic in the custody of the Sinhalese.

What the Sinhalese Buddhists believe to be the Buddha's tooth is still to be seen in the *Daladā Maligāwa* (The Temple of the Tooth) in Kandy. I was once allowed to see it. Devotees from every Buddhist country in the world come to worship it.¹

This also proves that the abyss which, in later ages, separated the Sinhalese *Hinayāna* from the Sino-Japanese *Mahāyāna* did not at that time exist. Devotees of both Schools could meet in a friendly spirit and discuss subjects of common interest.

Nor was it any longer necessary to go to India to study Buddhism. The Buddhist Church of Campa (in Central and Southern Annam), Cambodia, Java, and Ceylon, was vigorous and full of enthusiasm. It also possessed Pāli and Sanskrit scholars, and a great collection of sacred texts. There was also a perpetual exchange of ideas, texts, and works of art between the various groups. All that could be known of this religion might be acquired at these great centres of Buddhist learning.²

¹ See *Hinayāna*, p. 126.

² For more detailed information see *In the Footsteps of the Buddha*, by René Grousset, and also *Life of Hiuen-Tsing and Buddhist Records of the Western World*, by S. Beal.

SECTION SIX

The Final Period of the Decline and Fall of Buddhism in India—A.D. 900-1250

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Chief Causes of Decline

WE HAVE already seen that in A.D. 490, when Fa-Hsien visited India, Buddhism was the dominant religion, yet, even then, it was apparent that the heart of the religion was corrupt and the final decay had set in.¹ During Yuan Chwang's visit about two hundred years later he was greatly troubled to find that Buddhism was in a state of decline throughout the country, even in the land of the Dravidians in the far South.²

It was clear that Buddhism was no longer able to compete with Hinduism on even terms, for everywhere Hinduism was advancing and Buddhism retreating. During the next two or three centuries the struggle between the two religions became ever more fierce, with all the gains to the Hindus and the losses to the Buddhists.

This result was largely due to the fact that during this period sects multiplied in Hinduism, and most of them were inspired with an enthusiastic and fervent devotion to their particular gods. This was true of all India, but especially true of the Dravidian peoples of the South, where a great revolt against both Jainism and Buddhism arose in the fifth

¹ See Chap. 14, para. 15, *supra*.

² See Chap. 14, paras. 17 and 18, *supra*, and Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, pp. 318-19.

and sixth centuries, and continued with increasing violence until the indigenous deity Siva was left supreme.

For example, Yuan Chwang describes Kāñchī (Conjeeeveram), in South India, as a city of five miles round, containing many Jains, 10,000 Buddhist monks, and 80 Brāhmaṇa temples. He adds that the country possessed many ruins of old monasteries, but that only the walls were preserved. There were many hundred Deva temples, and a multitude of heretics, mostly Jains. So that even in his day Buddhism had suffered great losses.

In the eighth and ninth centuries there was a special revival of Hinduism, chiefly under the influence of the two great dialecticians, Kumārila and Śaṅkara (born A.D. 788), whom the tradition of the Buddhists regards as the two most formidable adversaries of their creed.

It was left to Śaṅkarāchārya, toward the end of the eighth century or beginning of the ninth, to give the death-blow to Buddhism, and to lay the foundation of a wider and more philosophic Śaivism than its earlier forms. This great teacher, who founded throughout India four monasteries, and his immediate disciples, who established ten orders of Śaiva ascetics to carry on the attack against the rival Buddhist monastic orders, completed the destruction already begun, and Buddhism ceased to exist as a living influence in Indian life.

It is interesting to note that the Dravidian objection to both Jainism and Buddhism was doctrinal. They objected to the Buddhists' denial of God and the soul, and to their cardinal philosophical doctrine that all 'knowledge appears and in an instant of time disappears: all is ceaseless flux'. The Dravidian reply to a Buddhist missionary from Ceylon, who had given utterance to the above doctrine was: 'Before thou didst finish uttering forth thy words and meaning, since thine understanding must have passed away, what revelation of truth and

virtue can there be?' The missionary was covered with confusion and knew not what to answer.¹

A considerable number of *Tantras* seem to date from the tenth and eleventh centuries. In their character these *Tantras* are parallel with the Buddhist *Tantras* which appear in the *Tibetan Canon*, and in Chinese translations in the tenth and eleventh centuries. 'In these there appears first an intensification of the erotic features of Tantrism. New Buddhas, each with his *sakti*, make their appearance, and the high religious value of intercourse with women is more insisted on than ever.'²

Farquhar draws attention to the fact that a Tantric University called *Vikramaśila*, on the Ganges, founded early in the ninth century, rose to splendour and sent forth a succession of scholars for two centuries, but they produced little except Tantric books and manuals of logic, and even these failed toward the end of the eleventh century.³

During this period also, works on a theistic or pantheistic theology, the final outcome of the *Mahāyāna* theory of the three bodies of the Buddha, were produced.⁴ This movement was powerfully influenced by the *Vedānta*, by the theism of *Nyāya*, and by *Śaivism*. The Universe and all the Buddhas come from an eternal being called *Ādibuddha*, i.e. the original Buddha, also called *Svayambhū*, i.e. the self-existent, and *Ādinātha*, or the First Lord. In the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* this creation is represented as happening precisely as in the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*, where the world is said to proceed from Brahman.⁵

Avalokiteśvara, the hero of the text, came forth from the spirit of *Ādibuddha* and co-operated in the creation of the

¹ See *E.R.E.*, V. 23-5.

² See Chap. 13, paras. 4, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, *supra*, and Farquhar, pp. 265-6, 272-3.

³ See *ibid.*, p. 272.

⁴ See Chap. 11, para. 27, *supra*.

⁵ See Chap. 7, para. 10, *supra*.

world, fashioning from his eyes the sun and moon, from his forehead Maheśvara, from his shoulders Brahmā, from his heart Nārāyana, and from his teeth Sarasvātī, goddess of speech.

Generally, as in the Aiśvārika system of Nepal, the eternal One is personal, but amongst others, such as the Vijnānavādins, who could not tolerate the idea of personality, Ādibuddha was regarded more as Brahman-Ātman is conceived of by Śaṅkara and other Māyāvādins, in a pantheistic way. The subject is still obscure, and the best treatment is found in L. de la Vallée Poussin's article *Ādibuddha*.¹

Poussin declares that the doctrine of Ādibuddha is 'the consummation of the philosophical, mystical, and mythological speculations of the Great Vehicle'. Ultimately, in philosophical Mahāyāna, Ādibuddha equals *śūnyatā*, the void, essential nothingness. The Ādibuddha system consists, properly speaking, in superimposing on the five human Buddhas, five Buddhas of contemplation, or *Dhyānibuddhas*, who are Ādibuddha's agents in creation. They are not, however, incarnations of the human Buddhas, but rather 'reflexes', *pratibimba*, 'magical projections', *nirmānakāya*.

Farquhar² has set forth the theory very clearly in the following table:

ĀDIBUDDHA

Dhyānibuddhas

Vairochana Akshobhya Ratnasambhava Amitābha Amoghasiddha

Dhyānibodhisattvas

Samantabhadra Vajrapāni Ratnapāni Avalokiteśvara Viśvapāni

Mānushibuddhas (Human Buddhas)

Dipañkara Kanakamuni Kāśyapa Gautama Maitreya

The Buddhology of the Great Vehicle is summarized in the doctrine of the 'three bodies' (*trikāya*). This doctrine has

¹ In *E.R.E.*, I. 93-100.

² See *Outline*, p. 273.

already been alluded to,¹ and we shall now state it in its least unorthodox form, which is undoubtedly the most ancient.

Buddha has three bodies: *dharma-kāya*, *sambhogakāya*, *nirmāṇakāya*. The *dharma-kāya*, or 'body of the law', is the real identical nature of every Buddha, and of every being, but this is not a body at all, it is simply the 'void', *śūnyatā*. The *nirmāṇakāya*, or magical body, which is comparable with the body of a Hindu *avatāra*, is simply an illusion, such as every magician can produce at will. This is the body which Śākyamuni displayed to men from the moment when he became a Buddha.

The 'real' body of the Buddhas is the 'body of bliss' (*sambhogakāya*), in which the Buddhas enjoy their full majesty, virtue, knowledge, and blessedness. It is the source of joy to the Bodhisattvas. These distinctions of bodies, however, in reality are of no importance. All these conceptions merge into one another, and the *sambhogakāya* is just as illusory, on its side, as the *nirmāṇakāya*. The latter is a transient illusion imposed upon men; the former is the cosmic illusion, which embraces the Bodhisattvas also, and is similar to the representation which the one being makes to himself.

Let us bear in mind that philosophical Mahāyāna was deeply influenced by Tantrism, and that Tantrism owes much to Mahāyānist doctrines, both to Mādhyamaka, and to Vijñānavāda, especially the theory of universal voidness (*śūnyatā*).²

But Tantrism is more than a pagan system of rites of worship and sorcery, it is *Tantrayāna* or *Vajrayāna*, a way to final liberation, or to the *summum bonum*. *Vajra* ('lightening') is originally and remains the weapon of Indra, of Vajrapāni, of the ascetics or *yogins*, against human or demoniac enemies.

But *vajra* has assumed new meanings: (i) It designates the

¹ See Chap. 11, paras. 27-29, *supra*; Chap. 16, para. 20, *infra*.

² See Chap. 13, para. 5, *supra*.

mystic or divine energy which is identified with 'intelligences (*vijñāna*). All divine beings are so many *vajrasattvas* ('being of *vajra*'). The supreme being, the Ādibuddha, is the *vajrasattva par excellence*. (ii) On the other hand, *vajra* (with the variant *mani*) is a decent or mystic phrase for *liṅga*, the male organ, just as *padma* (lotus), is the literary rendering of *yoni*, the female organ. Therefore, the old translation of the spell, *om mani padme hūṁ* ('Jewel in the lotus'), may be right after all.

While Mahāyāna states that all beings are 'future Buddhas', that all beings are 'embryos of *tathāgatas*', the two Tantric Schools maintain that all beings are *vajrasattvas*, are the unique Vajrasattva; they also maintain that the nature of *vajra* is immanent in all beings, and can be actualized by appropriate meditations and rites.¹

The period we are now considering (A.D. 900-1350) was a very brilliant period for the Jains, though, as we have already suggested, the Jains as well as the Buddhists were being regarded with ever-growing hostility by the Hindu sects.

For example, it is recorded that, in the tenth century, one of the most revered of the Śaiva poets, Tiru Jñāna Sambandhar, who is said to have converted the ruling Pāṇḍya monarch at Madura from Jainism back to the ancient faith in Śiva, 'looked upon the overthrow of the Jains and Buddhists as the one object of his life—of every one of his numerous hymns the tenth verse is uniformly devoted to their condemnation'. The *Periya Purāṇam* states that he afterwards took care that 8,000 Jains should be massacred—a massacre which is still commemorated at Madura.²

But in spite of the Hindu opposition, or perhaps because of it, their literature, which was already rich at the beginning of the ninth century, rose to its utmost splendour and strength during the next three centuries. That Jainism survived the

¹ See *E.R.E.*, XII. 196.

² See *E.R.E.*, V. 23.

Muhammadan conquest of North India (1193-1203), which gave Buddhism its death-wound, is proof of its character and organization. Though it never regained its former influence and splendour, it has continued to the present day in India, and still exercises a considerable influence on the life of the country.¹

In A.D. 972 the *Chinese Canon*, as it then was, was printed from wooden blocks. Numerous editions followed. But many new translations, especially Tantric works, were added between A.D. 972 and the beginning of the fourteenth century. Since then there has been no change. The full *Canon*—a set of rather imperfect translations—was printed in the fourteenth century, and has since been frequently published.

Though the bulk of the Tibetan translations had been made by the end of the ninth century, more were added in the eleventh, and a few as late as the thirteenth century.²

About A.D. 1206 Jenghiz Khān, the Mongol, conquered Tibet. His grandson, Kublai Khān, converted to Buddhism by a Tibetan abbot, gave this abbot and his successors temporal power in Tibet in A.D. 1270, and opened Mongolia to Buddhism.

The abbot, with the aid of a staff of scholars, translated the whole of the *Tibetan Canon* into Mongolian. The Mongol script is a modification of Syriac, which had been introduced into Central Asia by Nestorian missionaries. Thus Indian Buddhist literature received a sudden expansion of influence, and was carried wherever the Mongols went.³

In Nepal, in the first part of this period, we trace the rise of the Aiśvārika, or Theistic system, explained above, and fresh literature seems to have been written. It is in Nepal that the theistic *Guṇakāraṇḍavyūha* is found. The same

¹ See Farquhar, pp. 272, 277.

² See Chap. 5, para. 19, *supra*.

³ See E.R.E., VII. 786, 789.

theology appears in the *Svayambhūpurāṇa*, which is a *Māhātmya* of Nepal, and probably as late as the twelfth or thirteenth century. The *Daśabhūmiśvara* is a later recension of the *Mādhyamaka Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, augmented with résumés in Prākṛit verse. It is found in Nepal. (See *supra*, Chap. V, final paras.)

The most interesting fact about Nepalese Buddhism is that its sacred books were in Sanskrit, and the great majority of Sanskrit texts, whether *Mahāyāna* or Tantric, have been found there. They can be most conveniently studied in R. L. Mitra's *Nepalese Buddhist Literature*. No traces of a Nepalese *Buddhist Canon* have been found, but there is a curious sort of substitute for one: nine very famous works—eight of them being *Mahāyāna sūtras*, the ninth, one of the greatest of the early *Tantras*—which are held in special reverence, and receive regular worship.¹

We must now consider the highly controversial question of why Buddhism practically disappeared from India. We have referred to the degeneration of Buddhism through its contacts with and practical assimilation to Hinduism.²

We have also referred to the active opposition of the Hindu sects to Buddhism, and probable persecution of Buddhists.³ We have seen that Tantrism, and especially Left-hand Śāktism, were foreign to the real genius of Buddhism, and were slowly sapping its life. We know that the Buddhists suffered, along with the Hindus and the Jains, during the Muhammadan invasions and conquests.⁴

It is true that in parts of India Buddhism lingered on, in Magadha until about A.D. 1200, in Oudh until early in the thirteenth century, and in Bengal it still had a few adherents

¹ See Chap. 5, para. 23, *supra*, and Farquhar, pp. 274-5.

² See Chap. 7, paras. 9 and 10, *supra*.

³ See Chap. 15, paras. 2-5.

⁴ Chap. 13, para. 1, *supra*.

in the sixteenth century. In Orissa it died out in the middle of that century in consequence of the conquest of the country by the Musalmān Governor of Bengal. In Kāśmīr the accession to power of a Muhammadan ruler put an end to Buddhism in A.D. 1340.

In Nepal, however, Buddhism has maintained its existence, in a degenerate form, by the side of Hinduism, down to the present day. Though some Indians in Bengal still call themselves Buddhists, they avowedly combine the worship of Śiva and other Hindu deities with that of Buddha, and publicly attend the religious services of Hindu temples, and at the most important domestic ceremonies, such as those of marriage and death, they conjoin Hindu forms with those of Buddhism, and employ a Brāhmaṇ priest to assist their own priest in the performance of his sacred duties.¹

Farquhar says that in the sixteenth century the last groups of Tantric monks and nuns were absorbed into the Chaitanya Sect, and that these converts from the degraded Śākta Buddhist Orders had a disastrous effect upon the sect. Though marriage was permitted great impurity prevailed.²

Rhys Davids believes that Buddhism ceased to count in India partly because of the changes that took place in the faith itself, which he attributes chiefly to the conversion of those great invaders of Western India, the Scythians and the Kushan Tartars, who gave up their paganism, and adopted the dominant Buddhist faith of their new subjects. But in adopting it they contributed largely, by the necessary result of their own mental condition, to the process of change which had already set in. As for the Hindu accounts of a successful religious persecution by which Buddhism was destroyed, he says: 'I do not believe a word of it.'³

¹ See *E.R.E.*, V. 496-8 and VII. 211.

² See Farquhar, pp. 274, 311.

³ See *Buddhist India*, pp. 318-20.

Thomas says: 'There is no reason to think that the decline of Buddhism was due to persecution or, to any great extent, to Tantrism.' The great difference of organization between Hinduism and Buddhism lay in the fact that the Brāhman priests were not an ascetic body apart from the laity. They were part of the social structure, and an essential part in carrying out the rites and sacraments of the laity.

In this function they were essential even to the Buddhist laity. The Buddhist layman, who was all along a member of a Hindu caste, worshipping deities differing little from the Hindu gods. If the educated monk and his community disappeared, there was no essential principle to distinguish the Buddhist layman from the Hindu. With the disappearance of the monks, and the absence of any definite teaching, the god Dharma became another of the numberless gods of India. Buddhism dissolved in popular Bodhisattva worship.¹

Hackmann says that Buddhism laboured under a helpless inward decay. When Islām penetrated at last into India in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, all that still remained to be seen of the fallen religion was swept away utterly by the fanaticism of the iconoclastic Muslim.²

My own view is that 'inward decay' was the chief cause of its destruction. This began with the attempt to popularize Buddhism so as to attract the common people by means of gorgeous processions and other outward shows in imitation of the Brāhmans, and by an increasing use of charms and magic spells. No doubt the wholesale conversion of such peoples as the Scythians and Tartars, with their alien cultures, religious beliefs, and practices, contributed to this result, as Rhys Davids avers.

The degeneration of Buddhism was greatly accelerated when

¹ Thomas, pp. 246-7.

² See Hackmann, pp. 62-3.

philosophical Mahāyāna came under the influence of Tantrism, and especially Left-hand Śāktism.¹

Thomas does not accept this view. He points out that Hinduism, which also practised Tantrism, including Left-hand Śāktism, and still widely practises it, has met and overcome the hostile forces which overwhelmed Buddhism. The explanation is not far to seek. Hinduism embraces a great variety of religious beliefs and practices from the highest idealism of Theism and Pantheism down to the most degraded beliefs and practices of aboriginal Indian cults.

Tantrism would compare favourably with some of these, and, though condemned by the majority of enlightened Indians, still has its defenders, and was not calculated to have the same disastrous effects on Hinduism as on Buddhism.²

The Hinduizing of Buddhism certainly helped to prepare the way for its absorption into Hinduism, as Thomas points out. The Buddhist layman belonged to a Hindu caste, and was dependent upon the Brāhman priest in all the great crises of his life. The differences between Buddhists and Hindus became less and less until they practically disappeared, and the Buddhist became indistinguishable from the Hindu.

While these are the main causes of the weakness of Buddhism, and its disappearance from India, we must give more weight to Hindu and Buddhist accounts of the active persecution of Buddhists by Hindus than Rhys Davids and Thomas are willing to allow.

We cannot lightly dismiss as unreliable the accounts of the persecution of Jains and Buddhists already quoted. Both these sects seem to have been equally hated by the militant Hindus, and it seems probable that large numbers of Jains were actually killed. The enfeebled Buddhists would be more inclined to flee before their persecutors than to resist and

¹ See Chap. 13, *supra*.

² See Chap. 13, final para., *supra*.

suffer the extreme penalty; and this would account, to some extent, for the hundreds of empty monasteries so greatly deplored by Yuan Chwang and his fellow pilgrims. This view is confirmed by the fact that the Jains withstood and survived, though in diminished numbers, the Muslim persecutions which destroyed Buddhism.

Perhaps the most striking example of this devastation is Yuan Chwang's description of the almost complete destruction and desolation of those two most sacred cities of Kapilavastu and Pātiliputra and of the region round about, which was the real Holy Land of Buddhism.¹

Besides, we have the definite written testimonies of the Chinese pilgrims as to the severity of Hindu opposition to Buddhism. For example, Yuan Chwang tells us of the anger of the Brāhmans against himself for exalting Mahāyāna above both Hinayāna and Brāhmanism, and against the Buddhist-Śaivite King Harsha for giving him the opportunity.

Yuan Chwang's life was saved only by the active interposition of the king, and an attempt upon the king's own life very nearly succeeded. The Brāhmans actually destroyed by fire the tower Harsha had built to enshrine the image of the Buddha.

The pilgrims tell us that the Brāhman reaction was becoming more threatening every day, and we know that it increased in severity until it reached its climax in the eighth and ninth centuries. After that fell the Muslim avalanche. Islām destroyed in India the very memory of Græco-Buddhist civilization—a degenerate and Hinduized Buddhism disappeared from India, the land of its birth, but Hinduism, full of enthusiasm and reinvigorated by its recent revival, weathered the storm, though with terrible sufferings and losses.

¹ See Chap. 14, paras. 16–20, *supra*.

SECTION SEVEN

Buddhism in the Leading Mahāyāna Countries—Japan, China, and Tibet

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Buddhism in Japan

BUDDHISM is not and never has been the sole religion of Japan: it has always been closely connected with Shinto and Confucianism, and has been affected by them. A Japanese takes his ethics from Confucius, and a multitude of his customs from Shinto.

Nevertheless, Buddhism has been the dominant, and in many ways the distinctive religion of the Japanese people from the time when it was introduced into the country, and it has greatly influenced Japanese culture, civilization, and nationality. The impact of Buddhism contributed to the education of the people; it broadened their ideas, and developed their resources.

Buddhism was introduced into Japan from Southern Korea in the sixth century of the Christian era, in A.D. 552.¹ Some authorities, however, fix an earlier date, A.D. 538,² and even A.D. 522 and 534 have been suggested.³

The reigning Emperor of Japan received from a Korean prince a golden image of the Buddha, some Buddhist scriptures, and some works of art, together with a message that this new religion would bring 'happiness and good fortune' to

¹ See Hackmann, p. 88, and Underwood, *Shintoism*, p. 87.

² See E.R.E., VII. 482-3.

³ See Hackmann, op. cit., p. 88.

Japan, and that it was a charm which would 'open to man all the treasures he may desire'.

The introduction of this new religion met with strong opposition from the common people, and from an influential section of the nobility. Civil war broke out, and the conflict continued until about 587, by which time most of the opposition leaders had perished, and Buddhism was firmly established.

The Buddhist leaders used great tact, and succeeded in identifying their religion with all the best elements in Japanese tradition, and with the good qualities of Shinto and Confucianism. They declared that the gods of Shinto were incarnations of various Buddhas. This was the basic principle of what was later Ryōbu Shintō, which is simply Buddhist Shinto. Thus Japanese Buddhism became a syncretistic religion which was acceptable to the people.

Moreover, the priests were able to convince their people that the Sun Goddess of the inner shrine of Ise had welcomed Buddhism with a loud voice from her shrine, and was understood to have said that the Sun Goddess was identical with, or a manifestation of, the Buddha Vairochana. This was, indeed, a master-stroke of policy, which convinced the most obstinate doubters.

The corner-stone was laid when the Prince Regent, Shōtoku, and his imperial aunt, the Empress Suiko (A.D. 593-628), became zealous Buddhists, patrons and promoters of the religion.

Buddhism was intrinsically superior to Shinto. The followers of Shinto were unable to give a reason for the faith that was in them, whereas Buddhism had an elaborate system of theology, dogmatics, exegesis, and apologetics. The intellectual superiority of the new faith was apparent to all cultured minds.

The common people were won over to Buddhism by the

outward glory of a religion 'which presented a magnificent ritual, an imposing temple, gorgeous processions, richly clothed priests, waving banners, mystic mutterings, incense, bells, chants and prayers, and which promised a future life of happiness, and the service of learned and potent magicians, as they were viewed by the devotees—these elements made Buddhism popular'.

But, perhaps, the fundamental reason why Buddhism continued to triumph in Japan was that in the first half of the seventh century direct contact was made with Chinese Buddhism, and the predominant schools of the Chinese were transplanted into Japanese soil.

Korea and Japan did not translate the sacred books into their own languages, and the Chinese *Buddhist Canon* became and always remained the *Canon* of Japan, so that no Japanese could read a Buddhist text in his own tongue. However, inspired by Christian Bible Societies, who were translating Christian scriptures into Japanese, Japanese versions of the three *Sukhāvatī* texts, which Japanese Buddhists regard as supremely valuable, have recently been published.¹

It is impossible to estimate the debt Japan owes to China for her contributions to religion, civilization, and the arts. But Japan herself has also produced a number of new and, in some cases, remarkable schools of Buddhist thought, and she is now the recognized leader of all the *Mahāyāna* countries in Buddhist scholarship.

Chinese influence and learning helped to make Buddhism popular, and when the Emperor Shōmu (reigned 724-48) ordered the erection of a huge bronze image of the Buddha at Nara, the ancient capital of Japan, and invited the people to make voluntary contributions in material and labour, popular enthusiasm reached its climax.

'The image represents the Buddha in a sitting posture. It

¹ See Chap. 7, paras. 15-23, *supra*.

is fifty-five and a half feet high, the face alone measuring sixteen feet in length. On either side of the image two bronze attendants, each thirty feet high, stand ready to do his bidding. It required nearly five hundred tons of copper to make the body, and seven hundred and fifty pounds of refined gold. The image was completed in 752, in the reign of the Empress Koken, the daughter of the Emperor Shōmu.¹

From that day to this Buddhism in Japan has had a chequered career, but it has never lost its hold on the masses of the people. Buddhism was generally supported by the Court and Government and received great favours from them. It is chiefly owing to this support and these favours that it has flourished so long in Japan.

But in 1868, under the influence of Western Science and Culture, the Government officially dropped Buddhism, and it suffered a serious setback. There was, indeed, a widespread belief that the Christian religion would become the State religion.¹ Eventually, in the years 1888 and 1889, Buddhism was restored to favour and advanced with new energy.

The more philosophical doctrines and speculations of Mahāyāna Buddhism appeal only to certain groups in the higher circle. Buddhism to the broad masses of the population, and also to the majority of the monks, is more or less a traditional and external cult—they neither understand nor are interested in its highest conceptions.²

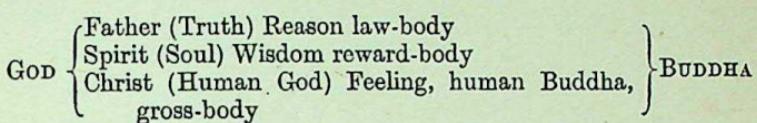
In modern times Buddhism has adopted many Christian customs and practices, such as special Evangelistic Services, Sunday-schools, Summer Schools, and has formed the Young Men's Buddhist Association on the model of the Y.M.C.A., for Buddhism still has infinite capacities for adaptation and absorption.

Some Buddhist leaders have gone further still and are trying

¹ See Hackmann, p. 170.

² See *ibid.*, p. 271.

to identify Buddhist and Christian doctrine. A Buddhist priest points out that 'the three bodies in Buddha respectively correspond to the three persons in God. Let me show this by a diagram:



Now that the three-body idea of Buddhism and the Trinity of Christianity are the same, we should say that the object of worship and adoration is one and the same in the two religions.¹

In the eighth century, Buddhism in Japan was very active in social work. It founded orphanages, hospitals for the blind, free medical dispensaries for the poor, and much besides. But from the ninth century to the nineteenth century its social activities were almost confined to the Temple schools.

In the twentieth century, however, a great change has taken place, and social work is coming into its own again. 'According to *A General View of the Religious Situation in Japan*, issued by the Department of Education in 1920, forty-five million Buddhists, during 1918, maintained three hundred and sixteen institutions including nurseries, kindergartens, orphanages, homes for ex-prisoners, and schools. On the other hand, according to the same *Report*, less than two hundred thousand Christians, co-operating with the missionaries and with the outside support they represent, maintained four hundred and twenty-nine such institutions.'²

Buddhism in Japan is pre-eminently a religion for the other world. Its devotees are always planning how they may get ready to meet the experiences which may be theirs after death. The relief of the dead from the evils which may

¹ See *Buddhism and Buddhists in Japan*, p. 61, by Cornell.

² See *ibid.*, p. 75.

threaten them offers a great opportunity to the unscrupulous priest in dealing with the people.

One of the scriptures goes so far as to declare: 'If a person who has committed the four heavy crimes, the five treacheries, and the ten evils, and has fallen into hell after death, has the *dhāraṇī* (mystic spells or prayers) pronounced over his body or even over his garments, he will be saved and be able to throw off the body given to him after death as a natural result of the crimes he has committed in life, and to enter the Pure Land.'

Another scripture says: 'If the *dhāraṇī* is read or pronounced, sung, held in the hand, or carried next to the skin, sewed in the garment, or swallowed, it is sure to give the person the unshakable and supreme wisdom (*bodhi*).'

One of the best-known and most popular events in the Japanese year is the annual *Bon* festival of the lanterns. The idea of the festival is to benefit spirits and relatives, especially parents in the other world; but even while parents are still living the merit of this festival brings them health and prosperity, and assures them after death of the joys of heaven, delivering them from pain and from evil states of existence.¹

The Pure Land Scripture says: 'The sons who do something good for the soul of the deceased will get back one seventh of the good they do. If they make a flag for the dead, they will be secure from the eight evils: the flag fluttering in the wind till it is worn out will bring immeasurable blessings.'

A rosary is worn very conspicuously by Buddhist priests and devotees. The rosary in Buddhism has a place not unlike that which it takes in Roman Catholicism.

The real difficulties in Buddhism are deep rooted. Its philosophical pantheism and its religious appeal are non-moral. In an inquiry or discussion-meeting at the close of a lecture on 'Buddhism and Christianity' a teacher asked: 'Is not the

¹ See *Hinayāna*, pp. 117-18, and Chap. 14.

mercy of Amida, which saves without any moral condition, greater than the love of Christ, which requires "works worthy of repentance"?" The question reveals one of the secrets of the weakness of modern Buddhism. (I am chiefly indebted to that most informative book, *Buddhism and Buddhists in Japan*, by Robert Cornell, for these detailed notes on present-day beliefs and practices.)

Amongst the Buddhist countries of the East, Japan is unquestionably the most important, and Buddhist scholars belonging to many different schools are doing work of the highest value for the historical study of Buddhism, and for the exposition of the philosophical systems of *Mahāyāna*. Almost all the leading universities and colleges in Japan make provision for Buddhistic research.¹

¹ See Hackmann, pp. 88-92, 269-295; Thomas, pp. 250-6; *E.R.E.*, VII. 482-4; Underwood, *Shintoism*, Chap. 8.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Buddhism in China

THE CAREER of Buddhism in China cannot be said to have been a happy one. As we have already shown, Buddhism, when introduced into that country, made no great progress in spite of the enthusiasm and devotion of its missionaries.¹

It was not until the fourth century A.D. that the Chinese were allowed to become Buddhist monks, but from that time Buddhism took a strong hold on China, and, in A.D. 518, this enthusiasm for Buddhism led the Emperor to order a collection of Chinese Buddhist texts to be made. In 520 a list of the books of the *Tripiṭaka* as translated was drawn up and still survives.

The climax was reached in A.D. 526, when the Patriarch of Indian Buddhism, Bodhidharma, left India and migrated to China, which then became the new centre of Buddhism.²

Then, after some centuries of considerable prosperity and growth, a strong reaction against it set in from the side of the State Religion and Confucianism. The opposition gained its greatest triumph in A.D. 845, when the Emperor, Wu-Tsung, decreed that the 4,600 convents, and the 40,000 religious buildings in the empire should be pulled down; and, further, that the 260,000 monks and nuns should adopt secular life—thus reducing the Buddhist Church and its monachism to the pitiable state in which we know it at the present time.

From that time the State has continually given Confucianism its full due, that is to say, it has maintained the laws and

¹ See Chap. 8, last two paras., *supra*.

² See Chap. 11, last four paras., *supra*, and also *E.R.E.*, X. 292.

rescripts shackling the Buddhist Church, and has even increased their severity.¹

Why should Buddhism, which met with such considerable success in other countries—for example, in Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Tibet, Mongolia—meet with comparative failure in China?

In all those countries Buddhism supplanted and absorbed the lower aboriginal cults of the peoples. But in China, Buddhism found a highly civilized and cultured people, with ancient religions and philosophies. There is little room for doubt that China possesses an indigenous system which can properly be called 'religious'. There is the witness of the ancient pictograms in which 'God' is constantly referred to as synonymous with 'Heaven'. We may infer that the earliest religious ideas of the Chinese were monotheistic.

The canonical history of China, as accepted and transmitted by Confucius, begins with Yao (2356 B.C.), who is characterized as being sincerely religious, as were his successors during the fourteen centuries covered by the history. Thus from the earliest period we find religious observances occupying a paramount place. The Supreme Being was recognized as the 'All-Father', the giver of grain, and the dispenser of every good and perfect gift.²

Even before the advent of Buddhism this indigenous religion had split up into two currents: an inferior one, which became prevalent amongst the masses, so-called Taoism; and another held by the governing and educated class, which may be most fitly called the State Religion, as described above, and must not be identified with Confucianism, which is really a moral system, though Confucius never denied or opposed the State Religion.³

¹ See *E.R.E.*, X. 292.

² For detailed information see *E.R.E.*, III. 549-52.

³ See Hackmann, pp. 200-1, and *E.R.E.*, X. 290.

Buddhism was quite unable to supplant, or to absorb, either the State Religion or Confucianism. It had greater success with Taoism, because Mahāyāna Buddhism and Taoism have much in common. Yet, in spite of this, it did not win over the masses to Buddhism in any real way, and for various reasons.

Buddhism in China was chiefly monastic, and monasticism did not appeal to the practical and strenuous Chinese. The monks received but little sympathy from the bulk of the population. Their whole manner of life is essentially opposed to Chinese ideas: it tends to loosen the social bonds, which are so strong in China, and is an unproductive life as well. So the monks are proverbially spoken of as 'the drones in the beehive', or as 'not being as useful as the silk worm'.¹

The monastic communities are mainly recruited from the ranks of children, for very few grown men become monks, and fewer still from the ranks of the wealthy or high-class families. It frequently happens that at a time of illness, or in fear of death, parents vow a child to the monastic life. And some parents give children in exchange for money.

The little ones are sent away to the monasteries, sometimes even at the age of two or three, and are entirely brought up there. So they grow up with a practical knowledge of a monk's work, and accept it from their childhood up as their destined career. The monastic habit, also, is worn by them from the beginning and their heads are completely shaved.²

Buddhist monks very rarely attain that which is so highly prized by the Chinese—literary culture. It is true that some monks become learned men in Buddhist scholarship, but that is of foreign origin, and counts for little.

All the spiritual receptivity and strenuousness of the Chinese nation, all its ideals, all its opinions, are rooted in its

¹ See *E.R.E.*, X. 293.

² See *E.R.E.*, X. 292, para. 'The Buddhist Priesthood'.

antiquity, and in the writings which are so intimately bound up in it. The study of the *classics* is, therefore, still the nerve centre of its life. From the peculiar nature of the Chinese language, which possesses no alphabet, only characters, it follows that each conception has to be written by a symbol of its own, therefore, a monk, who is a master of Buddhist literature, may find the *classics* a sealed book.

There are other reasons why the monks fail to attract the common people to Buddhism, for which see the authorities quoted.¹

Although the monks, for the above-mentioned reasons and others, are not much esteemed in China, their services are widely and eagerly sought. The ordinary Chinaman is not interested in Buddhist philosophical theories, but he has a real respect for and fear of the divinities of the Buddhist temples, whom he believes to be largely under the control of the Buddhist monks—because in China as elsewhere Buddhism has its pantheon of gods, not so numerous or varied as in Tibet, but still very powerful.

It has, in addition to its Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Saints, and Patriarchs, its gods of Indian origin numbering twenty or twenty-four *devas*, including Brahmā and Indra. It has also adopted certain purely Chinese tutelary gods, including the Chinese war-god, Kwan-ti.

The Chinaman regards these gods as his ultimate helpers in the emergencies of life. But he can only get in touch with them through the monks of the temple, who are acquainted with the ways and tempers of the gods, and who can instruct the suppliant as to the prayers and offerings most likely to win the god's attention, and to incline him to grant the worshipper's requests.

Thus the monks exercise great power over the people, and are frequently not too scrupulous in its use, often enriching

¹ Especially Hackmann, pp. 245-8.

both the monastery and themselves at the expense of terrified or greedy suppliants.¹

The laity in China have only assimilated Buddhist ideas in so far as they were easy to bring into line with existing Chinese religious ideas. The Chinese layman essentially belongs to his indigenous religion, which most clearly asserts its supremacy by the introduction of the ancestral tablets into Buddhist monasteries.

Nevertheless, Buddhism has had a real influence upon the literature of China, and more especially upon Chinese fiction, in which Buddhist legends are often used and elaborated. Its influence is also seen in Chinese paintings and, indeed, in all the cultural life of the Chinese.²

One other side of Buddhism ought to be mentioned even in so short a sketch. Though Buddhism in China was chiefly monastic, and, in a strict sense, failed to convert either the masses or the cultured classes, it did give birth to various sectarian lay movements. The members of these communities were strict vegetarians, and their chief saints were Śākyā, Amitābha, and Maitreya, and especially the Goddess of Mercy, Kwan-yin, the Indo-Tibetan Avalokita, translated into Chinese and feminine form. These names are continually on sectarian lips. The female element plays a part of great importance, even a predominating part, in the sects.

These sects, though Buddhist in name, are eclectic. They succeeded in blending Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism into a single religion; the Chinese saying that these three religions are but one is realized by sectarianism.

The sects were branded as dangerous to morality, to the State, and to the people, and to divert the dangers of State persecution they were driven underground and became 'secret societies'. History proves that they have often fostered

¹ See Chap. 16, paras. 22-26, *supra*.

² See Hackmann, pp. 50-7.

agitation, sedition, and even rebellion and civil wars which have raged for years. They found little favour, and had no widespread influence upon the Chinese people.

But, in fairness to the sects, it must be said that, within the sphere of their influence, they fostered piety and virtue, created by hopes of reward or by fears of punishment hereafter. The sects thus filled a blank in the people's life which official Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism failed to fill, for they had little to say about spiritual religion.¹

H. J. T. Johnson states that 'setting aside the members of the various Christian Churches, and the adherents of Judaism and Islām, and perhaps the Buddhist monks and nuns, it would be hard to describe the average Chinaman as being an exclusive adherent of any of the three systems which are usually called the three religions of China—Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. It would scarcely be too much to say that the basis of his religion is practically the same as that of his ancestors in the days before any of the three teachers from whom these systems professedly derive their origins had been born.'²

The following extract from a modern Travel Book is illuminating: 'Strict in their superstitions and superstitious observances, the Chinese have always been broad-minded where religion is concerned. For centuries the people of Peking, as a whole, have been in the habit of attending any temple for which they felt in the mood, whether Confucian, Taoist, or Buddhist: for if Confucius continued to offer a philosophy to the philosophically minded, the other two religions afforded opportunities of indulging in the most ample polytheism.'

'Thus it is indicative that in one building alone in the Imperial City, there is a circular hall which formerly housed a thousand Buddhas, now, alas, utterly vanished, while the

¹ See *E.R.E.*, III. 555-6, by that great authority, J. J. M. de Groot.

² See *E.R.E.*, X. 290.

edifices at the side, originally constructed in the sixteenth century, still shelter a very divergent body of gods and goddesses, including in their select ranks the Twenty-Four Dragon Kings, regnant over such elemental features of earth and universe as sun, moon, mountains, rivers, and air; the Twelve Dragon Gods, who control the Goat, Monkey, Cock, Dog, Pig, Rat, Ox, Tiger, Hare, Dragon, Serpent, and Horse of the Zodiac; and the God of Thunder and Goddess of Lightning.

'Nor must it be forgotten that in Pei-Hai, not so far away, stands the altar of Silkworms, where sacrifices were offered to the God of Mulberry Trees, and that next to it is another altar where the Empress used to preside, offering sacrifices to the Goddess of Silkworms. There also existed in the city formerly a temple to the God of Horses: a worship which the English mind finds no difficulty in accepting.'¹

Hackmann's summing up, which has been so widely criticized, must be accepted as substantially true, that 'despite all the influence brought to bear on the Chinese laity by Buddhism, it must always be remembered that the laity cannot rightly be considered a Buddhist people. In the statistics of Chinese religions, only the monks should be reckoned as Buddhists'.²

¹ *Escape with Me!* by Osbert Sitwell, pp. 218-19.

² See Hackmann, pp. 256-7.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Buddhism in Tibet, Mongolia, and Dependent Countries

THE BUDDHISM of Tibet is a distinct type of Buddhism essentially different from that of such countries as Ceylon and Burma, and even of China, Japan, and Korea.

No priest was found in primitive Buddhism, and the same is true of Hinayāna at the present day. For all purposes, ecclesiastical and social, the so-called priesthood is identical with the Order of Monks (the Saṅgha). The Lamaism of Tibet is the one exception to this rule. The Lāma is a real priest. He performs the most elaborate ceremonial and suggestive ritual, derived, in part at least, from Christian ceremonial and the commemorative observance of the Lord's Supper. At the frequent festivals the ritual observed is often intricate as well as highly ornate.¹

At the head of this hierarchy is the Dalai Lāma at Lhasa. The Dalai Lāma is credited with being the perpetual incarnation of Avalokiteśvara, the God of Mercy, and the special object of the popular *om mani* magical formula.

The theory assumes the continuous succession to the headship by the same individual. It supposes that the deceased head Lama is always reborn as a child within the country, and often in the neighbourhood of the monastery. This, of course, is not in harmony with the Buddhist doctrine of Karma and Rebirth, but is a purely arbitrary theory invented for practical purposes.

The infant is usually not chosen from one of the highest families, but often, indeed, from a family of very ordinary

¹ See *E.R.E.*, X. 289.

people. This is done to secure to the hierarchy complete control over the child, who is discovered by oracular means, and then duly installed in the vacant chair. He seldom grows to manhood, but usually dies while yet a youth. On his death he is similarly reborn, and so the process is repeated *ad infinitum*.¹

We have already referred to the origin of Tibetan Buddhism. A debased form of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, strongly tainted with Tantrism, was introduced into the country in the seventh century A.D., and, according to tradition, the first monastery was built in the year A.D. 749, by Padmasambhava (the lotus-born), a renowned adherent of Tantrism, who entered Tibet at the head of a band of Tantric Buddhists. In course of time Padmasambhava came to be worshipped as a saint.

This magical polytheistic Mahāyāna Buddhism easily absorbed the *Bon* belief in nature spirits and spirits of the dead, together with the magic cult known only to the *Bon* priests. Thus these two religions, which had so much in common, combined to form a new variety of Buddhism. Nevertheless, the *Bon* religion, in spite of all attempts to repress it, survived, as we shall show later on.²

Tibetan Buddhism has spread, in the course of centuries, far beyond the limits of its original home. We have already referred to its acceptance by the Mongols.³ It also became strong in Manchuria and in parts of China. Eventually, the Himalayan States, such as Nepāl, Bhutān, Sikkim, Kashmir, came completely under the influence of the daughter Church.

Monks of high standing, especially heads of monasteries, are called 'Lamas', which means 'Superior ones'. The religion is called after the monks, 'Lamaism', which name, however, Waddell severely criticizes.

¹ See *E.R.E.*, VII. 200-1, 786-7.

² See Chap. 18, last 12 paras., *infra*.

³ See Chap. 15, middle of chapter, *supra*.

As in China, so in Tibet, monks usually enter the monastery as children, though under better conditions.¹ Every Tibetan family is expected to devote at least one son to the monkhood, usually the first-born. He is handed over to the monastery when he is about eight or nine years old, and is entrusted to the care of a monk, who becomes his teacher.

The boy is at first simply a lay devotee equal to the Indian *upāsaka*. The next stage is that of a *novice*, who has gone through the ceremony of 'going forth from home'. The great majority of the monks, even the old ones, never rise above this grade to full initiation. The third stage is that of the fully ordained monk, equal to the Indian *bhikshu*. He is usually over twenty-five years of age, and comparatively few men ever reach this high position. He now has to vow to keep the 253 precepts. The fourth stage is that of the Abbot, who is a person of great dignity and authority.

Nuns are given corresponding titles. Not numerous, they are, as a rule, illiterate, and are allotted an inferior position, scarcely higher than that of the ordinary lay devotee.²

The gods of Lamaism are numberless, and it is impossible to describe them in detail—the whole pantheon 'weaves itself into a motley web which, at first sight, appears a hopeless tangle'. It is possible, however, to separate the principal deities into their respective classes.

First, there are the Buddhas. The world is conceived of as without beginning. It periodically breaks up, and is reconstituted again, like the five *skandhas* in man. Immense periods of time (*kalpas*) are classed together to form an epoch, and to receive their special number of Buddhas. The last great world epoch saw twenty-eight Buddhas, including Gautama.

¹ See Chap. 17, paras. 12 and 13, *supra*.

² See *Hinayāna*, Chap. 12, 'The Order of the Buddha's Disciples,' pp. 111-18; *E.R.E.*, VII. 784-9, and XII. 331-4; and Hackmann, pp. 168-88.

The greatest of the heavenly Buddhas in Mahayana Buddhism is Amitābha (the boundless light), the Buddha who corresponds to the historical Gautama. All these Buddhas, terrestrial and celestial, are, in fact, transitory appearances, mere illusions. The only real Buddha is Ādibuddha, the primordial and ultimate Buddha, from whom all the other Buddhas sprang. But, in the last analysis, even Ādibuddha equals the *void*, nothingness.

Second, there are the Bodhisattvas. Next to the Buddhas comes the order of Bodhisattvas, of whom the most celebrated is Avalokita (Avalokiteśvara). He is the divinity who is regularly incarnate in the Dalai Lāma at Lhasa. He is also the tutelary deity of Tibet, and as such bears the complimentary title of Padmapāṇi (the lotus-handed). He is represented as friendly and compassionate, with the power to help all mankind.

Other prominent Bodhisattvas are Mañjuśrī, the personification of wisdom; Samantabhadra, the divinity of religious ecstasy; and Vajrapāṇi, originally the Hindu god Indra, the god who wields the thunderbolt.

The feminine counterpart of the Bodhisattvas is the so-called Tārā (Star). The original Tārā was regarded as Avalokita's consort. Now there are many Tārās, especially green and white Tārās, but they are all regarded as reincarnations of the original Tārā. Of these incarnations the best known number twenty-one, but there are many others.

Avalokita has passed under feminine guise into Chinese Buddhism, and thence into Korean and Japanese, as Kwan-yin or Kwan-non, the Goddess of Mercy. Another group of female deities are the *Dākkīnīs*, a terrible and dangerous class—Waddell calls them 'Furies'. They also become incarnate in beings of the present day—one of them, for instance, in the Abbess of the Samding monastery in the Yamdok lake.¹

¹ See Hackmann, p. 162.

Third, there are the Demon Princes. These are worshipped as tutelary deities. They are real demons—dreadful and hideous beings—some with animal faces, some with human. Each has a consort, frequently represented with him—she is equally frightful and full of fury. These Demon Princes are believed to have power to drive away demons. The Devil Dancers of Ceylon wear masks representing these hideous beings in their devil-dancing and charming-ceremonies.

From these Demon Princes there is, in an ever-descending scale, an innumerable horde of uncanny beings—nature spirits such as serpent gods, a horse god, and all sorts of figures out of Hindu mythology, some of a friendly and helpful character, but most of them images of terror.¹

Fourth, there are the Guardian Gods of the Four Quarters. These are the guardians of the cardinal points of the compass, guardians of the four entrances to the heavens, which rise from Mount Mahā-Meru.

The god of the east—Dhritarāśtra, King of the *Ghandharvas*, a sort of angel—is white in colour, and holds a stringed instrument in his hands as his symbol.

The god of the west—Virūpākṣa, King of the *Nāgas*, the serpent gods—is red, and holds a serpent in his left hand.

The guardian of the south is Virūdhaka, King of a class of demons called *Khambhanda*. His colour is blue or green; he holds a sword.

The guardian of the north, of yellow colour, is Vaiśravaṇa (or Kubera), King of the *Yakṣas*. He is represented with a flag in his right hand, and in the left an ichneumon (mongoose) with a jewel in its mouth.

These watchers guard the heavens. But they also afford protection to the faithful, and are frequently portrayed and much revered. All the above gods and demons are well known in Ceylon, and the Buddhists there both revere and fear them.

¹ See *Hinayāna*, pp. 123-9.

Another of these lesser divinities is Yama, the judge of the dead and the King of Hell. There are eight hot and eight cold hells, not to mention four purgatories and countless minor adjoining hells. His consort is the terrible Lhamō, the tutelary deity of Lhassa.¹

Fifth, there are the Saints who are worshipped. First of these are the most illustrious disciples of the Buddha, and especially Maudgalyāyana, Śāriputra, Kāśyapa the Great, Ānanda, and Upāli. There is also a group of 'the sixteen strong holders of the doctrine', famous Ārhats, including Aśvaghosa, Nāgārjuna, Atīśa, Tsongkapa, and other personalities well known in the history of Lamaism. These are worshipped in this class. Also Padmasambhava.

THE RELIGION OF THE COMMON PEOPLE

The introduction of Buddhism into Tibet had a civilizing influence upon these savage and barbarous people: it tended to produce more kindly relations amongst themselves and a greater hospitality toward strangers. It had, however, other effects not so beneficial, as we shall show later on.

Of the higher doctrines of Buddhism, one only has taken a real hold on the Tibetan people, the doctrine of future recompense, the good or evil fruits of Karma. This was not, indeed, the Buddha's doctrine of Karma and Rebirth—that mysterious doctrine has never been really understood by the ordinary Buddhist in any age or country—but rather the Hindu doctrine of Transmigration and Karma.²

The Tibetan Buddhist believes in a real soul which migrates from body to body, and even from world to world—it may be reborn in this world, or in a hell or heaven. The desire to save the soul from hell and lead it to paradise is one great lever of Lama piety.

¹ See Hackmann, pp. 162-3, and *E.R.E.*, XII. 332.

² See *Hinayāna*, pp. 83-94.

Another lever, and a much more powerful one, is the dread of evil spirits. They believe that malignant and powerful spirits are hovering about them all the time, and the terror of these spirits rules their lives to an astonishing degree. Above everything else that an ordinary man asks of Lamaism is a charm to defend him from these dread powers. He believes that such a charm exists for every danger, and he is in a state of abject submission to the man who can provide the charm—the Lama.

Portions of the *Sacred Canon* are used as charms. The Lamas are invited to read these in private houses to combat evil spirits, sickness, or whatever else the suppliant fears. This practice is also common in Ceylon and other Hinayāna lands, where these sacred spells are called *pirit* or *pirita* (Pāli: *parittā*), 'protection'.¹

Magic power is concentrated in certain sacred formulas, which are to be repeated again and again. Of these the best known is the celebrated *Om mani padme hūm!* This formula is the special word of consecration of the Bodhisattva Avalokita (Padmapāni), who rules the Western Paradise. The repetition of this phrase not only secures the help of this powerful Bodhisattva for all possible earthly requirements, but also helps the industrious suppliant to enter that Paradise. The formula is therefore praised as containing all happiness, knowledge, and capacity.

We cannot deal in any adequate way, in the space at our disposal, with magic and charms, which really dominate the Buddhism of Tibet and all other Mahāyāna countries, and, to a scarcely less degree, Hinayāna Buddhism as well. But a few more words of explanation seem to be required to illuminate this dark subject.²

The virtue and efficacy of a charm (*mantra*) consists, it is

¹ See Chap. 7, para. 13, *supra*.

² See *Hinayāna*, pp. 127-9.

said, not so much in the meaning of the language used, which is generally a mixture of languages unknown both to the charmer and to the hearers, but in a peculiar arrangement and combination of certain letters, each having its own special power. The letters of the charm are arranged in a certain magical order.

In this system, some letters are called *poisonous*, others *deadly, fiery, quarrelsome, causing banishment*. On the other hand, there are other letters called *prosperous, pleasure-giving, health-giving, friendly, divine*, and a few are called *neutral*. Then again, these letters, when arranged and combined in a certain order, have different virtues—virtues much stronger than those of single letters.

Each of these combinations of letters is sacred to a certain demon, for whom it has an unaccountable, mysterious, and irresistible fascination from which he cannot free himself. The mysterious virtues of all these combined characters in a charm are sufficient to overpower and enslave the most powerful demons to the will of the officiating priest.

Charms need not always be spoken: they are efficacious also when written. These charm papers (called *mantras* or *dhāraṇīs*) are attached to walls, or carried on the person, usually secreted in amulets. Every Tibetan carries one or more about his person. They are firmly believed in as agencies of supernatural power. Sick persons swallow such charms to make them well. The present writer, when severely stung by hornets in Ceylon, was implored to swallow such a charm as the only means of allaying his sufferings.¹

Charms are written on the prayer flags, so common in Lamaism, which are found fluttering on the wind at the entrance of every lamasery, in temples, on altars, on the roofs of dwelling-houses, near wells, by the road-side—everywhere in fact one comes across these prayer flags. The prayers or

¹ See Chap. 16, paras. 23–25, *supra*.

charms will remain efficacious until the flags fall to pieces with age, and every separate flutter is a prayer.¹

Tibetans also carry the *prayer-cylinder* (incorrectly called the *prayer-wheel*) in their hands wherever they go, swinging it as they walk or talk, being certain that by so doing they are accumulating merit, for every spin of the charm on the cylinder is a prayer.

To obtain the full value of the charms, however, they must be combined with offerings in the temple. This brings great wealth to the Lamas. Valuable offerings are presented in an elaborate ritual, and with the accompaniment of loud music, religious dances, and performances. The most dangerous demons receive gifts only in the evening after sunset or in the night.

The bulk of the population is, owing to the above practices, and many others we have not been able to mention, entirely in the hands of the monks, who are the real rulers of the country, and who absorb for their own use the valuable products of the land, from the gold and silver and jewels, down to the little bits of butter brought by the very poor. None dares to resist the Lamas, because they not only hold the powers of life and death, but are also able to control the lives of men in future worlds.

The most remarkable proof of this is seen in the crowd of pilgrims which ceaselessly streams into Lhasa from all parts of the wide Lama territory in order to worship the head of the monastic system in the person of the Dalai Lāma, who is usually a mere child.

The thousands of devotees are slowly led past his throne with folded hands, and, during the brief pause they make in front of him, prostrate themselves on the ground, and strike the edge of the platform with their foreheads, rapidly murmuring prayers and the wishes of their heart. The divine child

¹ See Chap. 16, paras. 26 and 27, *supra*.

touches the heads of the pilgrims with the ribbons of his sceptre, in token of blessing, and of acceptance of their prayers.

These devotees see around the Dalai Lāma the most powerful of the great Lamas, and above them they see, in imagination, all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, gods, guardian spirits, and saints, whom the Lamas have power to bring to their aid, against the dreadful, horrible, bloodthirsty, dread powers, full of terrible strength, whom they see with equal or greater clearness, hovering around to destroy them.

Who can wonder that the poor ignorant herd of human beings crouches timidly and reverently at the feet of the all-powerful Lamas, because, as they say, 'without a Lama in front, there is no admission to the deity'.¹

As Waddell points out, Mahāyāna offers no prospect whatever of attaining Nirvāṇa in this life to anyone except those who actually enter its celibate order of monks. This is worth stressing, because many Western writers suggest that Mahāyāna has opened the door to *the highest* to all laymen. Therefore, since Nirvāṇa is unattainable, the layman fixes his eyes on a heaven, usually Amitābha's paradise in the West in the company of Avalokita.

He further stresses the fact that in Tibet we see Buddhism at the extreme limit of its inevitable development when unfettered. For several centuries the temporal government has been entirely in the hands of the monks themselves. As a consequence, there have arisen swarming armies of the State-supported celibate monks, who live parasitically upon the people and decimate them. The Tibetan nation, before the introduction of Buddhism in the eighth century A.D., was one of the most virile in Eastern Asia; it overran and even conquered China more than once.²

Since then it has steadily declined in power and numbers

¹ See Hackmann, pp. 191-9.

² See E.R.E., VII. 788-9.

until now it has not a tenth part of its former population. According to a census taken by the Chinese in 1737 the Lamas numbered one in three of the total population. At the present day about one in eight appears to be nearer the mark, according to Waddell's observations and those of W. W. Rockhill. The number of monasteries in Tibet is over 3,100, the largest of which contain as many as 10,000 monks.¹

The withdrawing of so many of the ablest and most virile men from the family and social life of the nation is bound to have a serious influence upon the population, and upon the economic life of the people.

As we have already pointed out, the aboriginal pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet is called by the people *Bon* (pronounced *Pon*); and those who profess it are called *Bon-pa*, i.e. 'the Bons.' It is essentially a shamanist, devil-charming, necromantic cult with devil-dancing, and is closely allied to the Taoism of China.

It was actively suppressed, and its establishments were destroyed by the Tibetan rulers on their conversion to Buddhism from the seventh century onward, at the instigation of the Lamas. But it is still largely and openly professed over the greater part of Eastern and South-eastern Tibet, the most populous part of the country, which has been for many centuries under Chinese rule, and outside the domination of the Grand Lamas.²

The Shamanism of Tibet appears to be almost identical with the Demonism of Ceylon, where priests and priestesses of this cult number 3,861, as against 10,097 Buddhist monks.

The following is a translation of parts of a Devil Priest's charm still used in Ceylon which will, perhaps, give the reader some real insight into the cruel and vindictive nature of

¹ See *E.R.E.*, XII. 331, and Hackmann, p. 187.

² See *E.R.E.*, XII. 332-3.

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 Demonism. This charm is called the *Cadawara Tripenneema* charm, and is used to produce in the victim madness—running into woods, graveyards, and streams, shouting, dancing, extreme heat in the blood—and speedy death.

‘Adored be thou, O Buddha! The she-demons *Cadawara Reeri Yaksenee*, *Billey Reeri Yaksenee*, *Calu Candi Yaksenee*, *Marana Keela Yaksenee*, *Samavan Cadawara Reeri Yaksenee*, and *Calu Roopa Yaksenee*, come instantly—come thundering from the sky. Make the sky and the earth roar and reel as ye come. . . .

‘O *Aaweysa Cadawara Reeri Yaksenee*, I call upon thee to listen to what thy priest tells thee. Demon, thy own priest calls thee. I beg thee to attend to what I tell thee, and not to anything else, which any other priest may tell thee.

‘O *Aaweysa Cadawara Reeri Yaksenee*, O great she-demon, I call upon thee this day to be bound by my charm. I call upon thee to accept an offering which I make to thee and to thy sisters. . . .

‘I call upon thee to tell thee that, from this hour, and this minute, this human sacrifice, which I dedicate to thee, is wholly thine. Therefore, protect me, but take this human being as an offering acceptable to thee.

‘O she-demon, O my sister, eat him. Eat his flesh and drink his blood. Eat his bones and muscles and nerves. Drink his blood and suck his marrow. Eat his liver and lungs and entrails. I command thee this day to suck the blood out of this human being. I give him over to thee. Take him. I bind thee—I have bound thee. Let this be so.’¹

Waddell quotes from the Chinese annals of the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. an account of sacrifices offered periodically by the *Bon* priests. ‘The victims sacrificed are *men*, horses, oxen, and asses.’ Even in the Buddhist period, in the eighth century A.D., similar bloody rites were celebrated by the

¹ See *Hīnayāna*, pp. 127-9.

professing Buddhist king of Tibet in concluding a treaty with the Chinese.

Now the *Bon* priests offer on their altars wool and yak hair, and images of *men* and animals made of dough, presumably instead of the sacrificial animals of the primitive cult.¹

¹ See *E.R.E.*, XII. 333.

PART TWO.—THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT
OF THE DOCTRINE OF BUDDHOLOGY

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Doctrine of the *Pāli Pitakas*

IN EARLY Buddhism the Buddha was regarded as a human being, but as one possessed of omniscience, supernatural powers, and other qualities unattainable by other beings. Moreover, the appearance of a Buddha was believed to be an exceedingly rare event in the world, only one occurring in several *kalpas*.

Now a *kalpa* is a 'World Age' or 'World Cycle' of incalculable duration, extending to millions of millions of years. Nevertheless, it is said in the *Mahāvastu* (i. 77), that the future Buddha must pass through many such periods before attaining supreme Buddhahood, and this was, and is, the general belief of Buddhists.¹

The goal of life in early Buddhism was usually Ārhathood, or the attainment of Nirvāṇa. The stages of progress to Ārhat-hood were four, viz., *sotapānna*, *sakadāgāmi*, *anāgāmi*, and *arahatta*.

Sometimes, but very rarely, the goal was Pacceka-buddhahood, or private Buddhahood, supreme enlightenment obtained by one's own powers without the help of teachers, for oneself alone. Their perfection, however, does not extend so far that they could preach it to the world. In the *Apadāna* the Buddha is reported to have said: 'In the whole universe there is, except me only, no one who is equal to the Pacceka-buddhas.' Therefore, the existence of beings of this grade appears to have been admitted at a very early age.²

There remains, then, the other conception, viz., the attain-

¹ For a full discussion of this subject see *E.R.E.*, I. 187-90.

² See Oldenberg's *Buddha*, pp. 320-2.

ment of Buddhahood proper, *supreme enlightenment*, in order to teach the world. The Theravādins did not definitely state that Buddhahood is unattainable, for there is the instance of Sumedha-brāhmaṇa becoming Śākyamuni, and that of a certain being who will become Maitreya Buddha.

Such instances are so few and far between, however, that they did not think it reasonable to hold up this ideal for the generality of human beings to follow. Moreover, they held that there was no difference between the Nirvāṇa of the Buddha and that of an Ārhat.¹

Some Buddhist scholars and modern Buddhists hold the theory that those parts of the *Pitakas* which represent the Buddha as just a man, though a man of unusual powers and qualities, are to be accepted as belonging to the *primitive* tradition; while those parts which describe him as a supranormal being, possessing unique physical and mental characteristics, are to be regarded as the elaborations of later ages. This view has proved very attractive to many modern minds both in the East and in the West.²

But there are other possible views of the Buddha. The view held when the *Pitakas* were written, and still held by the overwhelming majority of Buddhists, is that Gautama was one of a series of Buddhas, separated from one another by incalculable periods of time. In *Dīgha* ii. 1-15, six previous Buddhas, with Gautama making the seventh, are mentioned.³

Gautama is represented as relating their life-stories, and, apart from names and unessential details, each story is an almost word-for-word repetition of the last. The explanation is contained in the oft-repeated phrase: 'That, in such a case, is the rule.' Each successive Buddha is spoken of as 'the Exalted One, Arahant, Buddha Supreme'.

Gautama's previous birth, before he was born into this

¹ See Dutt, pp. 4, 26.

³ See Chap. 20, para. 1, *infra*.

² See *Hinayāna*, pp. 10-11.

world as the *Bodhisat*, is said to have been in the Tushita-heaven (or the Heaven of Delight), where he lived for a hundred thousand years as a god. His birth into this world was miraculous.

As soon as he was born he stood firm on both feet, and with his face to the North, took seven strides and, looking round on every side, uttered as with the voice of a bull: 'Chief am I in the world. Eldest am I in the world. Foremost am I in the world. This is my last birth! There is now no more coming to be!'¹

The above is sufficient to show the general nature of this Buddha-cult, but it is not easy to trace this cult to its birth.

Whether Gautama Buddha was the first Buddha, and the theory of Buddhas began with him, or whether it existed in India before his day, is a very difficult question to answer. The Brāhmans, indeed, held a theory of the *Superman*, known by the Thirty-two (physical) Marks of the Superman, who must become either a great king, or a supreme religious teacher.

Nor ought we to overlook the fact that the Jains also have a list of twenty-three leaders preceding Mahāvīra, their last teacher. Moreover, it is probable that Mahāvīra's predecessor, Pārśva, was a historical personage, so that for the Jains there was a starting-point for the formation of a series. As both these leaders were earlier than Gautama Buddha, there was here also a starting-point for a rival series of Buddhas.²

The *Pitakas* state plainly that Gautama was such a Superman, and that he had all the Thirty-two Marks.

I need only mention a few of the marks to show how grotesque the picture is: '(7) His ankles are over the exact

¹ See *S.B.B.*, III. 1-13.

² See Thomas, pp. 147-8; and for general information on this subject see *S.B.B.*, IV. 132-67 (D. iii., pp. 1, 142-62, 2, 163-79), and *S.B.B.*, VI. 70-83 (M. ii., 133-46, S.N., 102-12).

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 middle of his tread (that is, the point of the heel is the same distance from the ankle as are the toes). (8) His legs are like an antelope's. (9) While standing bolt upright, he can, without bending, touch and rub his knees with both hands at once. (22) He has the jaw of a lion. (23) He has forty teeth. (24) His teeth are all the same length. (25) There are no interstices between his teeth. (27) His tongue is big. ("Putting forth his tongue he passed it up and down the orifices of both ears and of both nostrils and covered with it the whole expanse of his forehead.") (32) His head is shaped like a turban.

'These, brethren, are the Thirty-two Marks of the Superman, wherewith endowed he has two careers that lie open to him and none other: that of the Lord of the Wheel and that of Buddha Supreme. . . . And seers not of our communion, brethren, are acquainted with these Marks, but they know not for what deeds done any one of the Marks is acquired.'

Then the Buddha is represented as relating to his followers how he gradually acquired the marks of the Superman as rewards for great deeds in former lives: one in one life, and another in another life, during the countless ages of his pilgrimage through the worlds.¹

When we read such a description of the Buddha in two of our oldest documents, the *Dīgha-Nikāya* and the *Majjhima*, we begin to wonder how far even these records can be trusted to give us the truth about his person and teaching. But this is, I think, good evidence for the views of the men who wrote the *Pitakas*, or at least of the men who edited the *Pitakas* which we have today.

But these men were born long after the last contemporary of the Buddha had passed away. Therefore, their evidence on the question under discussion, a question which would require the strongest possible personal testimony of eye-

¹ *S.B.B.*, IV., p. 139 (D. iii. 1, 145).

witnesses to establish, does not carry much weight, and we are compelled to think that the theory that the Buddha was a *Superman* of this kind originated long after his death.

Did the belief that he was the Buddha also originate in a later age? Mrs. Rhys Davids (and probably few scholars in the East or the West had so wide or so detailed a knowledge of the *Pāli Pātakas*) thought that the 'Buddha-cult' developed after Gautama's death. She did not find any mention of it in connexion with the First Conference immediately after the Buddha's death, or at the Second Conference a century later. Even at the Third Conference this cult was not emphasized.¹

This argument from silence must not be pressed too far, especially where the records are so scanty. We may say, however, that there is a strong presumption that in Gautama's day Buddhology had not arisen, and that he was the first man to be called a Buddha, and that all the previous Buddhas mentioned in the *Pātakas* and in other Buddhist books, and all future Buddhas, owe their origin to him.

T. W. Rhys Davids speaks of the doctrine of the *Bodhisattva* as an evil weed which covered up and destroyed much that was of value in the earlier teaching. He questions whether the Buddha himself knew anything of the theory. In our oldest documents the two conceptions of Buddha and Arahant are still in a state of fusion. 'The teacher never called himself a Buddha (as distinct from an Arahant).'

'When addressed as Buddha, or spoken of as such by his followers, it is always doubtful whether anything more is meant than an enlightened Arahant.'²

Perhaps we shall get nearest to a solution of this problem of the Buddha's personality if we ask and attempt to answer two questions:

¹ See *Sakya*, pp. 353-4.

² See *S.B.B.*, III. 1-3, and Oldenberg's *Buddha*, pp. 321-30.

1. *What did he think himself to be?*
2. *What did his followers think him to be?*

1. It is doubtful whether Gautama, at the time that he fled from home to homelessness, thought of himself as different from the thousands of Indians who were taking similar action. He and they had one common object; to find a way of escape from the endless round of rebirths, which terrified them.

In the interval between his flight and his attainment of *enlightenment* under the bodhi-tree, he appears to have regarded himself as just one of a company of ascetics, differing from them only in this, that he went to greater lengths in his ascetic practices, and did not shrink from any suffering necessary to attain his object.

When at last his extreme asceticism took him to the very gates of death, from which with great difficulty he was brought back, he shared the views of his companions that he had failed in his quest, and was tempted to return home to the responsibilities of ordinary life. This temptation was very strong and almost overpowered him.¹

It is after his *enlightenment* that we see the development of new views of himself, and of his relationship to the rest of mankind.

It is evident that he believed himself to have attained the goal of his endeavour, to have found a way of escape from the endless round of rebirths. Though others might claim to have attained, he feels that *his* enlightenment is unique—no other living man shares it with him. He even doubts whether any other human being can be brought to understand it and share it, and is inclined to enjoy it alone, and to leave the rest of mankind to their fate.

It is the intervention of the great god Brahmā which causes him to become a preacher of his gospel to men.²

¹ See *Hīnayāna*, pp. 35–6.

² See *ibid.*, p. 38.

Now, unless this story of the Buddha's interview with Brahmā is the pure invention of a later age, it must have been told by the Buddha himself, because no other man was present. Scholars are generally agreed that the *source* from which this story comes belongs to the oldest strata of the *Pitakas*.

Moreover, this is not the kind of story a later age was likely to invent, because it takes the honour of initiating the preaching of the newly discovered truth from the Buddha, and gives it to Brahmā. We must presume, therefore, that this story was told by Gautama himself, and that he believed it to be true.

How exalted must have been his view of himself as the only possessor of the truth which could save the world, and as one to whom Brahmā, the God of gods, kneels as a suppliant.

His attitude toward the five ascetics, his former companions, confirms this view. As they see Gautama approaching, they decide to show him no respect, for they regard him as an ascetic who failed and is now living in self-indulgence. But the nearer Gautama approaches the harder they find it to keep to their resolution: there is something in his appearance and in his attitude toward them which overawes them.

He completes their discomfiture when he says: 'Ye monks, address not the Perfect One (Tathāgatā) by his name, and call him not "Friend". The Perfect One, O monks, is the holy, supreme Buddha. Open ye your ears, O monks; the deliverance from death is found: I teach you, I preach the Law.'¹

They make a show of further resistance, but he asks them: 'Tell me ye monks, have I ever before addressed you in these terms? The Perfect One, O monks, is the holy highest Buddha.'

They are now convinced and submit to be taught by him, and become his first disciples.²

¹ See *ibid.*, p. 39.

² See Oldenberg's *Buddha*, pp. 125-7, *Mahāvagga* i. 6-10.

This attitude the Buddha maintained (according to the *Pitakas*) toward his disciples, opposing teachers, and the world at large, until the day of his death. Nobles and kings were expected to do him homage, and are represented as submitting to him as to a superior. Even Brāhmaṇ teachers, the most exclusive of men, are said to have bowed down before him.

One illustration of this must suffice. It refers to the submission to the Buddha of 'the Brāhmaṇ Brahmāyu, an old and aged man, far advanced in years and nearing the end of his span, being one hundred and twenty years old, versed on all the three *Vedas*,' etc.

'Here-upon the Brāhmaṇ Brahmāyu arose and, with his right shoulder respectfully bared, bowed his head at the Lord's feet, which he kissed and stroked again and again, as he gave his name: "The Brāhmaṇ Brahmāyu am I, Gautama."

'And all that were there wondered and marvelled at the power and might of "the recluse" in that this renowned and famous Brāhmaṇ should so humble himself.'¹

Our study, I think, has led us to the following conclusions.

(a) Before his *enlightenment*, Gautama regarded himself as no more than a man. If we are correct in our reading of his life-story, he was always ego-centric; the world revolved round him. His fleeing from home to homelessness was a purely egotistical impulse: the world was on fire, and he fled to save himself as Christian fled from the City of Destruction.

The impulse in both cases was the same, and was perfectly natural under the circumstances. The theory that he regarded himself as the *Bodhisat*, the coming Saviour of gods and men, must, I think, be given up. He was just one of a great multitude who were seeking for release.

This view is borne out by the following facts:

i. That he sat at the feet of great teachers seeking help from them.

¹ See *S.B.B.*, VI. 70-8 (M. ii. 133-46).

ii. When he joined the five ascetics it was as an ascetic and not as a being on a higher plane. His strong personality, and his more passionate abandonment to ascetic practices, led to his becoming their chief, but he was only the first among equals.

This is proved by his words to them in the Deer Park after his enlightenment, 'Tell me, ye monks, have I ever before addressed you in these terms?', and by the fact that the ascetics addressed him by *name* and called him 'Friend'. They had evidently lived together on familiar and equal terms, and they now resented his assumption of superiority.

(b) After his *enlightenment*, his whole attitude toward himself and the world undergoes a change.

i. He now feels himself to be a man standing alone. He alone has conquered. He alone possesses the essential knowledge. He has the power and the right to give this knowledge to the world, or to withhold it. I think we must accept the following passage in the *Mahāvagga* (i. 6-8) as substantially representing his idea of himself. In this passage we read:

'The All-subduing, the All-knowing, am I, in everything that I am, without a spot. I have given up everything; I am without desire, a delivered one. By my own power I possess knowledge; whom shall I call my master! I have no teacher; no one is to be compared to me. In the world, including the heavens, there is no one like unto me. I am the Holy One in the world; I am the Supreme Master. I alone am the perfect Buddha; the flames are extinct in me; I have attained the Nirvāṇa.'¹

ii. The same view of himself and of his relation to others is seen in his attitude to his old friends, the ascetics, when he rebukes them for calling him by name and as 'Friend', and demands that they should do homage to him as 'The Perfect One, the holy supreme Buddha, who has found the way of deliverance from death'.

¹ See Oldenberg's *Buddha*, pp. 328-9.

iii. His attitude toward all the other great teachers of his day shows that he did not regard himself as one great teacher in a group of great men, but as a teacher without a fellow. Our limited space does not allow us to elaborate this, but see the following authority.¹

iv. The Buddha's acceptance of the humble submission of the aged Brāhmaṇa Brahmāyu can only be justified on the assumption that he thought himself so much that renowned teacher's superior as to make such a submission honourable to the Brāhmaṇa.

Enough has been said to show that Gautama regarded himself as a *man*, but as a man superior to gods and men; for he alone held the knowledge which could release both gods and men from the endless round of rebirth.

2. *What did his disciples think him to be?*

This question can be answered very briefly. The records show plainly that they accepted Gautama's estimate of himself. Evidence of this is to be found on nearly every page of the *Pitakas*. They were continually saying such things as this: 'From the Exalted One comes all our wisdom.' They regarded their master as not only morally perfect, but also as omniscient and omnipotent: he had all knowledge, and could do whatsoever he would.

The success of the Buddha was in no small measure due to this belief in his abnormal powers, which his disciples spread on every side. It may be said that we are taking the *Pitakas* at their face value. But it is not so; the claim which the *Pitakas* make for the Buddha, as shown above, will account for the rapid spread of Buddhism in India and other lands, and no lesser claim will.

In conclusion, what impression have we received of Gautama from our study of the records?

We feel that he was a great man; probably the greatest

¹ See *S.B.B.*.. V, Intro., pp. xv-xxiv.

man India has ever produced. He was a religious genius, and a great personality. This is seen not only in his resolve to leave home, but also in his carrying out his resolve in the face of almost overwhelming difficulties.

Again, it is seen in the tenacity with which he held to his course, in spite of frequent disappointments and very meagre results. But especially is it seen after his ascetic course had proved to be so complete a failure, in his resistance of the temptation to return home, and in his resolve to attain *enlightenment* or to die in the attempt.

After his *enlightenment*, when he began his public work, he had no doubt of himself or his mission. Neither scorn nor opposition moved him. He went straight forward. He was habitually dignified and calm. This comes out especially in his controversies with other religious teachers.

Concerning these he is able to say: 'That in disputation with anyone whatsoever, I could be thrown into confusion and embarrassment; there is no possibility of such a thing: and because I know of no such possibility on that account it is that I remain quiet.'

He was a thinker of no mean order. He possessed not only a great mind, but a magnetic personality as well. He attracted men and bound them to himself by his personal influence: his followers were devoted to him. He was, without doubt, a great leader of men.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Further Evolution of Buddhology

WE HAVE already considered the development of the theory of the Buddha in the *Pāli Piṭakas*. In the latest *Suttas* we find a list of six previous Buddhas, and, as a part of this doctrine of a succession of Buddhas, there arose the belief in a future Buddha, Metteyya or Maitreya. Gautama Buddha, both in the *Dīgha* (iii. 76) and in the *Mahāvastu* (iii. 240) is represented as prophesying Maitreya's coming. But these quasi-historical Buddhas do not play a large part in later doctrine, as they were overshadowed by the Bodhisattva doctrine, and the innumerable Buddhas to which this doctrine gave rise. For the Theravādins Gautama Buddha held the whole Buddha-field.¹

By the first century A.D., however, Buddhism had developed a strong movement toward theism, and the Buddha had come to be regarded as a semi-divine being with new and marvellous attributes. On the earlier Buddhist sculptures the Buddha was represented by some symbol, especially by the *dharma-chakra*, the 'wheel of doctrine'. But in this century, images of the Buddha appear for the first time, and they were worshipped by the common people. In fact, the principal object of the Gandhāra Art is the representation of the person of the Buddha.

This seems to indicate that the Buddha had already become an object of *bhakti*, and now the adoration of the Buddha was pushed into the central point of his religion. During the reign of Kanishka, the greatest of the Kushan kings, Buddhism divided into two distinct and opposing sects, called Hinayāna and Mahāyāna.

¹ See Thomas, pp. 166-8.

The Mahāsāṅghikas, who, of course, were Hinayānists, so idealized the Buddha as almost to lose sight of his historical personality. They identified him in his essential essence with the Universal Buddhahood, which, in time, became identification with the Universe.

An important branch of this School was known as the Lokottaravādins, or Transcendentalists. They believed that Gautama, the Buddha, was a Superman, a *lokottara*, superior to and independent of the world. This theory is developed in the *Mahāvastu*, where the Buddha is represented as a great magician, who could do things impossible for a human being. Buddha *bhakti* is also very prominent here. Great merit is attached to adoration of the Buddha, merit sufficient for the attainment of Nirvāṇa. Moreover, the offering of flowers to the Buddha, or circumambulating a *stupa*, will earn for the devotee infinite reward. Such teaching forms a link with Mahāyāna.

The next work to be considered is the *Lalitavistara*, which began as a descriptive life of the Buddha for the Sarvāstivādin School of the Hinayāna, though in the form in which it has come down to us it contains the full Mahāyāna teaching.

This book describes the Bodhisattva's descent from the Tushita-heaven to be born on earth. But, we are told, he was not born as an ordinary human being, but as the *Mahāpurusha*, 'the Great Spirit'. In the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upaniṣads* the title *Mahāpurusha* is reserved for the Creator, *Prajāpati*, and is given later on to *Brahmā* and *Vishnu*.

The *Lalitavistara* is valuable as a key to the development of the Buddha legend from its earliest beginnings, showing how the Buddha, beginning his career as a human ascetic, ended it more like a god above all gods than a man. Here we have the fully developed Mahāyāna doctrine of the Buddha.

The *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, *The Lotus of the True Doctrine*, and the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, tried to erase from the minds of

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 the people the lingering impression about the historical existence of Śākyamuni. We find the sceptic inquiring how the Buddha could, within the short space of forty years after the attainment of Bodhi at Gayā, perform the innumerable duties of a Tathāgata and lead incalculable Bodhisattvas to Buddhahood.

It appears like the paradox of a man of twenty-five years claiming centenarians as his sons, and the latter calling him their father. Similarly the Buddha's pointing to Bodhisattvas, who had been performing the various duties conducive to Buddhahood for many millions of years, as his disciples appears paradoxical.

Maitreya, who acts the part of sceptic, says further that in the minds of those Bodhisattvas who recently became Mahāyānists there may be doubts of this nature; so the Tathāgata ought to explain the paradox for the welfare of the religion.

The Buddha then asks his audience thrice to believe his words, and says: 'It is not to be considered that Bhagavān Śākyamuni lately leaving his family attained Bodhi at Gayā—I attained *sambodhi* incalculable ages ago, and since then I have been preaching the Dharma. All that I have said about the previous Tathāgatas, Dipaṅkara and the others, and their Parinirvāṇa, were of my own creation. They were only my expedients for imparting the Dharma.

'All the Tathāgata says is true, but people devoid of right knowledge construe different meanings out of it. Though I have not attained Parinirvāṇa, I say that I have attained it. In order to arouse curiosity in the minds of the people, and a desire to see the Buddha, I say that the appearance of a Buddha is an exceedingly rare event—I made a show of Nirvāṇa but did not enter it.'¹

In a word, the Buddha is made to say that his human life was a mere appearance, a sort of magic show: he never was

¹ See Dutt, p. 112.

a man, he was really eternal and had always been in the world. He would continue his career as a Buddha 'for many ten millions of myriads of hundreds of thousands of cycles before attaining final Nirvāṇa.'

The *Lotus* is devoted chiefly to the Buddhas and their qualities. The Buddhas, for they are now believed to be many, are conceived of as mighty beneficent beings rivalling the gods of surrounding Hinduism—they have become little else than the gods of the old polytheism under other names. The element of devotion to the Buddha (*bhakti*) is very prominent. The Buddha is everlasting, all-knowing, all-seeing—He wields magic power, *māyā*, which he uses in sport, *līlā*.

It should be noted that though the *Lotus* gives a list of sixteen Buddhas, Śākyamuni is still regarded as the chief, and occupies the centre of the Buddha worlds. Nevertheless, each Buddha has a world of his own where he reigns supreme without interference from any other Buddha. The supremacy of Śākyamuni is another link with Hinayāna.

This book, however, represents a high development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially in the direction of Buddha-*bhakti*, the adoration of relics, the worshipping of images, and, above all, a highly flourishing epoch of Buddhist art, because *stūpas*, magnificent *vihāras*, *topes*, and monasteries with their images of the Buddha, are mentioned.

In the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* it is stated that neither god nor man could calculate the length of Śākyamuni's life. Though it might be possible to count the drops of water in a sea, it would be impossible to ascertain the length of his life. The *Tathāgatās* have no origin—they are ever-existing and inconceivable.¹

Āśvaghoṣa, in his *Saundarānandakāvya*, describes the Buddha as persuading Nanda to postpone his own Nirvāṇa,

¹ See Dutt, pp. 113-14.

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 and to follow the Bodhisattva career, so that he may preach salvation to others, and conduct them on their way to emancipation. This is distinctive Mahāyāna doctrine.

In his *Sūtrālaṅkāra* also he teaches real Buddha-*bhakti*. For example, he tells us that Gautamī, the foster-mother of Gautama Buddha, attained Nirvāṇa through the grace of the Buddha.

Nāgārjuna, the founder of the Madhyamaka School of Mahāyāna, carried the docetic doctrine of the Buddha a step farther in his great book, the *Mādhyamakakārikās*. Though he did not actually deny the bodily presence of the Buddha in the world, he draws a sharp distinction between the Buddha's physical body (*jātakāya*) and his real substance (*dharma-kāya*).

The Buddha whom men thought they saw was only a phantom of himself which he caused to appear for their good. According to Nāgārjuna's doctrine of the *void*, the Buddha was no more real than the other visible and tangible things they perceived with their senses—no more real, indeed, than themselves.

Even in the books of the great Hīnayānic scholar, Buddha-*ghosha*, the doctrine of Buddha-*bhakti* is taught. The Buddha is no longer regarded just as a great human teacher, but as a semi-divine being with superhuman powers, on the lines of early Mahāyāna teaching.

Vasubandhu, in his doctrine of the Buddha, is even more extreme than Nāgārjuna. While he accepted the magical body of the Buddha, which men thought to be a real body, he almost lost sight of Śākyamuni's appearance on earth, and believed in innumerable condescension bodies (which he calls apparitions) appearing everywhere in any form, and especially in the visions of the Bodhisattvas. He came, finally, to regard the Buddha as identical with the Universe, which, in his view, is pure undifferential thought, which the mind can neither define nor grasp.

A further, and unhappy, development of Buddhology appears in the *Tantras*, which are said to have been written from the sixth century onward. In these books it is claimed that each Buddha (and Bodhisattva) has a female consort, his *sākti*, his energy.

This theory, and the practices which arose out of it, led to serious moral degeneration amongst Mahāyānists. More *Tantras* appear to have been written in the tenth and eleventh centuries, in which there appears an intensification of the erotic features of Tantrism. New Buddhas, each with his *sākti*, appear.

The Buddhology of the Great Vehicle is summarized in the doctrine of the 'three-bodies of the Buddha' (*trikāya*), and the theory of Ādibuddha, i.e. the original Buddha, also called Svayambhū, i.e. the self-existent, and Adinatha, the First Lord. The Universe and all the Buddhas come from the Ādibuddha, who is eternal. The Ādibuddha system consists, properly speaking, in superimposing on the five human Buddhas, five Buddhas of contemplation, or *Dhyānibuddhas*, who are Ādibuddha's agents in creation.

Poussin declares that the doctrine of Ādibuddha is 'the consummation of the philosophical, mystical, and mythological speculations of the Great Vehicle'. Ultimately, in philosophical Mahāyāna, Ādibuddha equals *śūnyatā* (the *void*), essential nothingness, or essencelessness. The three bodies of the Buddha, *dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, *nirmāṇakāya*, are equally illusory: as unreal as a mirage, the reflexion of moonlight in water, or a dream image.

See Chapter Seven for a description of the great popular Buddha, Amitābha ('the Buddha of immeasurable light'), or, as he is also called, Amitāyus ('the Buddha of immeasurable life'), who reigns in a wonderful heaven, the 'Land of Bliss'.

The masses of the people in Mahāyāna Buddhist lands believe literally in this 'Land of Bliss' or 'Pure Land'. They

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regard it as a material heaven to be attained by the grace
of Amitābha, or by faith in Amitābha.

In the *Sukhāvatī*, Amitābha and Avalokita are represented as saving those who believe almost in spite of themselves: 'As the cat saves her young by taking them in her teeth.'

McGovern, however, says that among all philosophic Buddhists the 'Pure Land' is only a symbol, a state of mind, an awakening of the *Buddha seed*, the bursting into flame of the spark of spiritual life, to be obtained by means of mystic adoration, and devotional realization of the true nature of reality; a realization of fundamental union of the self with the Greater Self, by which I understand him to mean the Absolute Buddha.

He also lays stress upon the immanence as well as the transcendence of the Absolute, and seeks to find the Universal Buddha in the lowest inhabitant of hell as well as in the supremely illuminated sage.

He adds that this is taught in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* and in the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra*. This, however, is only another way of setting forth the doctrine of the *void*, *śūnyatā*, which is the real Absolute of *Mahāyāna*.¹

In the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, it is related that when Avalokiteśvara returned to the Buddha after having obtained the great Spell, *Om mani padme hūm*, 770,000,000 Buddhas assembled to be present on so great an occasion, because the acquiring of the great spell was a much more important matter than it may seem.

Thomas says that *Manipadme* is really one word and a female vocative, so that with the syllables of invocation *om* and *hūm* it means 'O *Manipadmā*.' *Manipadmā* is 'she who has a jewel-lotus'.²

¹ See W. M. McGovern, *An Introduction to Mahāyāna Buddhism*, pp. 129, 222.

² See Thomas, pp. 187, 192, 193.

This chapter would not be complete without some reference to the views of Suzuki, a modern Japanese Buddhist who, while accepting the abstract theories of the great creative thinkers of Mahāyāna, such as Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu, states that these doctrines are 'altogether too abstract to be of any use to our earthly life. The doctrine of *Suchness* (*Bhūtatathātā*) did not seem to have any immediate bearings on our religious consciousness. The fact is, it must pass through some practical modification before it fully satisfies our spiritual needs.'¹

He proceeds to develop a theory of Dharmakāya on the lines of the Christian doctrine of God, in contrast to the earlier theory which practically identified Dharmakāya, or Ādi-buddha, with the Vedāntic Brahman.

For example, he states: 'The Dharmakāya is a spiritual existence which is absolutely one, is real and true, and forms the *raison d'être* of all beings.' We all have something in ourselves of Dharmakāya, we are all ultimately destined to attain Buddhahood when the human intelligence, Bodhi, is perfectly identified with, or absorbed in, that of the Dharmakāya, and when our earthly life becomes the realization of the will of Dharmakāya.²

Dharmakāya is love because it embraces all beings with fatherly tenderness—'I am the father of all beings, and they are my children.'³ 'If we draw a parallelism between the Buddhist Trikāya and the Christian Trinity, the Body of Transformation (*Nirmānakāya*) may be considered to correspond to Christ in the flesh, the Body of Bliss (*Sambhogakāya*) either to Christ in glory or to the Holy Ghost, and Dharmakāya to Godhead.'⁴

Christ is conceived by Buddhists also as a manifestation of

¹ See Suzuki, p. 217.

² See *ibid.*, pp. 231-2.

³ See 'Avataṃsaka', *ibid.*, pp. 238-9.

⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 256, and Chap. 16, para. 20, *supra*.

the Dharmakāya in a human form. He is a Buddha, and as such not essentially different from Śākyamuni. The Dharmakāya revealed itself as Śākyamuni to the Indian mind because that was in harmony with its needs. The Dharmakāya appeared in the person of Christ on the Semitic stage because it suited their taste best in this way.

Men are led on by Dharmakāya from lower to higher cults till they can fully grasp the true and real meaning of the Dharmakāya in its absolute purity, or, to use the Christian terminology, till 'we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'¹

As for his Dharmakāya, it has an eternal life, it was never born, and it will never perish.² 'It will be evident from this that Buddhists are ready to consider all religious or moral leaders of mankind, whatever their nationality, as the Body of Transformation of the Dharmakāya. Translated into Christian thoughts: "God reveals himself in every being that is worthy of him."

'He reveals himself not only at a certain period in history, but everywhere and all the time. His glory is perceived throughout all the stages of human culture. This manifestation, from the very nature of God, cannot be intermittent and sporadic. The following from Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians 12⁴⁻⁷, when read in this connexion, sounds almost like a Buddhist philosopher's utterance: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal."³

¹ 2 Corinthians 3¹⁸.

² See Suzuki, p. 261.

³ See *ibid.*, pp. 261-2.

Finally, Suzuki quotes from the *Avatamsaka*:

'The Tathāgata appeared not on earth,
Nor did he enter Nirvāṇa;
By the supreme power of his inmost will,
He reveals himself freely as he wills.
All the Buddhas come from nowhere,
And depart for nowhere;
The Body of Dharma that is pure, immaculate and
incomprehensible,
Is invested with a power miraculously free.'¹

'Its ultimate reality (Dharmakāya) is like unto the
vastness of space;
Its manifested forms are like unto magic shows;
Its virtues excellent are inexhaustible.
This, indeed, is the spiritual state of Buddhas only.'²

¹ *Avatamsaka*, xiv. 72.

² See *Avatamsaka*, xiv. 73; *ibid.*, pp. 376-8.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Genesis and Evolution of the Theory of
Bodhisattvas

WE DO NOT know enough of the historical background of Buddhism to be able to say with certainty how the conception of a Bodhisattva, a being destined for Buddhahood, began. But we know that the Bodhisattva's career was conceived of as one of long training through many lives, and rising through difficult stages (*bhūmis*) to Buddhahood.

It is clear, however, that the Bodhisattva doctrine had little significance for the Theravādins. The *Jātakas* originally did not form part of their scriptures, and were only an after-thought. Nevertheless, there were a few stories found in the *Nikāyas*, in which the Buddha refers to incidents in one of his previous births, or to incidents in the careers of the Buddhas who preceded him.

The doctrine of a Bodhisattva, as a being who acquires six or ten perfect virtues in order to attain Buddhahood, is certainly later than the bulk of the *Pāli Canon*. Even the *Abhidharma* work, *Puggala-pannatti*, which describes different characters, from that of a vicious man up to the perfect Buddha, makes no mention of a Bodhisattva.¹

We are not certain whether the conception of the Bodhisattva, and the practice of the six *pāramitās* were introduced for the first time by the Mahāsāṅghikas or by the Sarvāstivādins. The six *pāramitās*, the fulfilment of which is compulsory for the Bodhisattvas, are frequently mentioned in the works of both these schools, and both are responsible for

¹ See Thomas, pp. 147-8.

the growth of a large mass of *Avadāna* literature, the central theme of which is the fulfilment of the *pāramitās*.

Both these schools continued their development in India long after the Theravādins had passed to Ceylon and disappeared from India. Moreover, they remained in contact for a long time with one another and with the Mahāyānists, all living together and teaching in the same monasteries. Therefore, all sorts of borrowing would be possible. It was in the Mahāyānist schools, however, that the extreme development of the Bodhisattva Ideal was found.

We must look to the *Avadānas* especially for the introduction of the Bodhisattva conception. They were written to show how the man who took the Bodhisattva vow did so, not only that he might become a Buddha, but also that he might help all other living creatures to realize this ideal. He was willing to postpone his own Nirvāṇa, for Nirvāṇa always remained the ultimate goal of all Buddhists, and even to suffer the tortures of hell for thousands of years, so that, in the end, by his own self-sacrificing endeavours, he could take all other men into Nirvāṇa with him.

The *Avadānas*, which are primarily the production of the Sarvāstivādins, clearly show a new phase of development within Hinayānic *Bodhisattva-yāna*. The Lokottaravādins of the Mahāsāṅghikas went a little farther than this in regard to Bodhisattvas and their powers.

Throughout the Sanskrit literature, whether Hinayāna or Mahāyāna, earlier or later, the *pāramitās* are mentioned as six. It is in the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* that we first find mention of the ten *pāramitās*.¹ This is one of the nine recognized texts of the Nepalese Buddhists, and it is the most important and comprehensive of the Mahāyāna works treating mainly of the *bhūmis*. The next in importance are the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, and the *Mādhyamakāvatāra*, both following the *Daśabhūmika*.

¹ See Chap. 9, para. 16, *supra*.

sūtra with minor variations. For example, the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* recognizes twelve *bhūmis*.

The account of the ten *bhūmis* in the *Mahāvastu* appears to be the earliest, but the description is very scanty, and does not contain the details which are important and even essential from the *Mahāyāna* standpoint—because the *Mahāvastu* always refers to the historical Bodhisattva, Gautama, or as it usually calls him, *Sākyamuni*. There will, indeed, be future Buddhas, but each is chosen by a Buddha to be his successor. It is not open to every man to choose to become a Buddha.

In the *Sarvāstivādin* schools the belief that one human being, Gautama Buddha, had attained by his own efforts and powers *supreme enlightenment*, was fully accepted. They also believed that he was only one amongst many such beings who had done so. They reasoned, therefore, that if Gautama and others had been able gradually to prepare themselves through many lives for the great attainment, other men might be expected to do the same.

It was natural, therefore, that the career he undertook, and so perfectly accomplished, came to be regarded as a possible career for all—not for the monk alone, but for the common man, the father of a family occupied with the everyday worldly life (for was not Gautama a married man and a father?), the merchant, the craftsman, the king, nay, even the labourer and the pariah—all these may take the Bodhisattva vow, and ultimately attain to Buddhahood.

Nevertheless, it was acknowledged, both in *Hīnayāna* and *Mahāyāna*, that the most difficult task of an adept is the fulfilment of the conditions laid down for passing from the state of a *puthujjana* (an ordinary man of the world) to that of an *ārya* (a man capable of attaining the highest knowledge). This demands sustained effort through many births, and possibly through world-cycles. It is impossible to exaggerate

the difficulty of getting into the first of the ten stages (*bhūmis*) of a Bodhisattva.

For example, we have in Hīnayānic works an elaborate description of the qualities necessary for a person to pass into the state of an *ārya*. It is often said, in connexion with the conversions made by the Buddha, that he delivered discourses after ascertaining the previous merits (*kusala mulas*) of the person whose conversion he had in view. The usual passage is: 'The teacher at dawn looked round the world and saw the previous merits of the man.' This implies that the real benefits of the discourses cannot be derived by everybody. It is only those whose previous good karma has raised them to a certain height that derive benefits from the discourses.

It may be useful to know that a *puthujjana* is defined in the *Majjhima-nikāya* as one who labours under the delusion of 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness', and thinks that he has *rūpa*, *vedanā*, and so on. Not knowing the true law, he develops attachment to things which he should avoid, and thereby produces and increases the *āsavas* (inflowing impurities) of *kāma* (desire), *bhāva* (desire for existence), and *avijjā* (ignorance).¹

A modern Buddhist writes as follows: 'Birth as a human being is inconceivably difficult to attain, and, when gained, it is only the cream of the select, of the most fortunate of men, that achieve the stupendous and hardly won sight face to face of Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. . . . The Dhamma is distinctly not for everyone, in the sense that everyone cannot at once reach up to its supremely altruistic and sublimer heights.'

'Comparatively but a few, a very very few, of *Samsāra*'s teeming "beings", at any one time, have evolved highly enough to appreciate and accept the Tri-Ratna. Are then the Buddhists of Ceylon, Burma, etc., thus highly evolved? It

¹ See Dutt, pp. 247, 249.

is difficult to say. The Triple Gem is the shining crest of the elect only. Therefore, the Tri-Ratna are truly and worthily named.'¹

The Mahāyānists demand that one must develop *Bodhicitta* (thought of enlightenment, or 'the Buddha-heart') before he is entitled to begin the practices of the *bhūmis*.

Suzuki says that Bodhicitta, a form of the Dharmakāya as it manifests itself in the human heart, is present in the hearts of all sentient beings, but in ordinary mortals it is dormant and miserably crippled by its unenlightened intercourse with the world of sensuality.

He quotes Vasubandhu in his *Discourse on the Awakening of the Bodhicitta*. 'The Bodhicitta, or intelligence heart, is awakened in us (1) by thinking of the Buddhas, (2) by reflecting on the faults of material existence, (3) by observing the deplorable state in which sentient beings are living, and, finally, (4) by aspiring after those virtues which are acquired by a Tathāgatā in the highest enlightenment.'

Having awakened his Bodhicitta from its unconscious slumber, a Bodhisattva will now proceed to make his vows. 'Vow', in this connexion, means a strong wish, aspiration, prayer, or an inflexible determination to carry out one's will even through an infinite series of rebirths.²

A BODHISATTVA'S VOW³

'For the sake of all sentient beings on earth,
I aspire for the abode of enlightenment which is most
high;
In all-embracing love awakened, and with a heart
steadily firm,
Even my life I will sacrifice, dear as it is.

¹ See C. H. S. Ward, *Ethics of Gotama Buddha*, p. 10.

² See D. T. Suzuki, pp. 299, 302, 303, 307.

³ *Suvarṇaprabhā Sūtra*, Chap. 26.

In enlightenment no sorrows are found, no burning
desires;
'Tis enjoyed by all men who are wise.
All sentient creatures from the turbulent waters of
the triple world,
I'll release, and to eternal peace them I'll lead.'¹

About the pre-Bodhisattva stage the *Sūtrālankāra* says that 'a being who has developed *Adimukti* (aspiration) through innumerable aeons, filled himself with merits as the sea is by water, gone through the preliminary purification by the observance of the Bodhisattva discipline, becomes wise by learning *sāstras*, and makes his mind soft and pliable, is entitled to exert in *bhāvanā* (i.e. repeated *darśana*), and benefit by the teachings of the Buddha'. Therefore, according to this rule, the pre-Bodhisattva stage may well stretch into millions of years.

The *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* mentions that 'in the pre-Bodhisattva stage, a being develops *bodhicitta*, after having accumulated enough merits, followed the prescribed practices, worshipped many Buddhas, possessed pure and sublime intention and aspirations, and held compassion always in front of his mind. He is desirous of attaining the Buddha-knowledge, the ten powers, and the four great *vaiśāradayas* (four acquisitions which make Buddhas fearless), realizing the sameness of all the dharmas, rescuing all beings from misery, acquiring every form of knowledge, and purifying all *Buddha-ksetras* (fields of gifts).'²

The Bodhisattva, then, is he who, for the sake of all sentient beings, renounces the attainment of Ārhatship, which he could have attained in the sixth *bhūmi*, makes the four great vows, and practises the six transcendent virtues (*pāramitās*).

¹ See Suzuki, p. 398.

² See Dutt, pp. 242, 243, 247, and *E.R.E.*, II. 744.

The four vows are: (1) to save all beings, (2) to destroy all passions, (3) to know the truth and teach it to others, (4) to lead others to the path of Buddhahood.

The six *pāramitās* are: (1) almsgiving and teaching the ignorant, (2) keeping the *Sīlas*, or Moral Laws, (3) patience and long-suffering, (4) diligence in keeping the vows, (5) meditation or contemplation, (6) wisdom.¹

Bodhisattvas are not only supposed to perform innumerable good deeds, but also to turn the meritorious karma thus gained over to all sentient beings, to help them to attain Buddhahood for themselves. This act of the transference of merit is strongly encouraged, and many Mahāyānist treatises end with the phrase: 'May the merit gained by the composition of this work be taken by all sentient beings, and aid in the awakening of their Buddha-heart.'

Therefore, while the Mahāyānists believed it to be possible for all men to take the vow to become a Buddha, they recognized that it was supremely difficult for the ordinary man, even for an extraordinary man like Śākyamuni, to enter the First Stage (*bhūmi*) of the path that led to Buddhahood.

As we have seen above, incalculable periods of time would usually be spent in the pre-Bodhisattva stage. Even when, after myriads of lives spent in striving in earth and heavens and hells, he succeeded in entering the first *bhūmi*, there were nine other *bhūmis* to be attained and lived through before he became a Buddha.

The chief difference between Hinayāna and Mahāyāna centres round the conception of the highest truth, which, according to the Hinayānists, is *Pudgalaśūnyatā* only, while, according to the Mahāyānists, it is both *Pudgala* and *Dharmaśūnyatā*.

As the Mahāyānists hold that an insight into *Dharmaśūnyatā*

¹ See W. M. McGovern, *An Introduction to Mahāyāna Buddhism* p. 100.

is the only means of attainment of the highest knowledge, and that an insight into *Pudgalasūnyatā* equips an adept for proceeding higher up and realizing *Dharmaśūnyatā*, they divide their stages of progress into two sections.

The first section, comprising the first six *bhūmis*, leads on the adept to the realization of *Pudgalasūnyatā*, while the second, comprising the last four *bhūmis*, gives him the real knowledge, *Dharmaśūnyatā*, or *Dharmasamatā*, the knowledge which the Bodhisattvas claim, but which, according to the Mahāyānists, is beyond the capacity of the Hinayānists.

To describe the ten stages (*bhūmis*) in detail would take up more space than is at present at our disposal, therefore the reader is referred to the authorities given below for further information.¹

As we have already seen, the Bodhisattva was supposed to accept misery for the sake of the world, to take upon himself the punishment of the sins of the world, even to spend long ages in hells enduring the torments of the damned, that those who deserved to suffer might be spared suffering.

But is the career of a Bodhisattva so full of real self-sacrifice as the terms used of it suggest? Bodhisattvas are, indeed, encouraged to endure sufferings for the sake of the salvation of mortals, but are their sufferings real? In some cases certainly not.

For example, when *great* Bodhisattvas like Vajrapāni, Mañjughosa, Padmapāni, descend into hell, they turn the fierce flame and biting cold of the lower regions into abodes of paradise, or bring away with them, purified from sins, the hosts of the damned.

The Bodhisattva who has sacrificed himself for others is borne in the car of Mahāyāna inevitably to enlightenment, which he does not desire for himself, but seeks to attain

¹ *E.R.E.*, II. 739-53; Dutt, pp. 238-89; Thomas, pp. 189-211; Keith, pp. 273-302.

solely for others. From physical suffering he is exempt, since he sins not except for the good of others; from moral suffering because he has knowledge: while others strive vainly for unsatisfying ends, he has pure delight in his own action of compassion.'¹

This is utterly ideal; there is no real acceptance by the Bodhisattva of punishment for the sins of others, no real taking upon himself their sin as morally evil, and a crushing burden upon the soul. Even for his own earlier sins the Bodhisattva pays only a nominal penalty, and, having once entered upon the *stages*, his virtue is supreme—neither physical nor moral evil can assail him.

This doctrine of Bodhisattvas enduring vicarious suffering through unnumbered ages is, indeed, an extreme development of the belief in the power of thought to affect other lives, as well as creating a powerful impression for good in one's own, and the Indian belief in the magic power of speech may have rendered it more easy of acceptance.²

For example, in the *Majjhimanikāya* the Buddha is reported to have given the following advice to Rahula, his son: 'Rahula, practise the mental development of universal love, and it will dispel whatever weariness is in thee; practise the mental development of universal sympathy, and it will dispel whatever dissatisfaction is in thee; practise the mental development of universal neutrality, and it will dispel whatever displeasure is in thee.'

Rahula is supposed, by these mental concentrations, to be conferring benefits upon all living creatures, but really he is only benefiting himself.

Let us take another example. The results of cultivating Universal Love are thus stated by the Buddha in the *Anguttara-Nikāya*: 'Bhikkhus! He who develops Universal Love by

¹ See Keith, p. 282 with references.

² See *ibid.*, pp. 293-4.

practising it over and over will be happy with the eleven good results that it produces. What are the eleven?

'They are: (1) He sleeps well, (2) wakes well, (3) is not troubled by frightful dreams, (4) becomes agreeable to human beings, (5) becomes agreeable to non-human beings, (6) is protected by *devas*, (7) is not hurt by fire, poison, or weapons, (8) his thoughts are easily and readily concentrated, (9) his countenance becomes inviting, (10) he will be conscious in his dying moment, and (11) if he be one who did not enter into the four paths of Tranquillity, he will be born in an abode of the "Noble Ones".'

Once more, *in thought* all living beings are benefited by this feeling of Universal Love, but *in reality* only the Bhikkhus are benefited.

In the self-same way, the Bodhisattva's *vow* to endure aeons of suffering may be reckoned as equivalent to the actual suffering, and the *thought* to be equal to the deed.

The unreality of the sufferings of Bodhisattvas is made clear in the *Jātaka* stories. For example, in 'The Hare-Mark in the Moon'.

The hare, the future Buddha Gautama, determined to give his body as a meal to the hungry Brāhman. Therefore, he said to the Brāhman: 'Go my friend and gather wood, and, when you have made a fire of coals, come and tell me. I will sacrifice my life to give you a meal by jumping into the bed of live coals. When my body is cooked, do you eat my flesh.'

By and by the fire became a mass of red coals, and the hare jumped into the midst of it, 'as delighted in mind as a royal flamingo when he alights in a cluster of lotuses'. But the fire was able to make hot not even so much as a hair-pore of the Future Buddha's body. There he sat in the midst of it feeling delightfully cool and happy.

This is a typical example of the *Jātaka* stories. Those circumstances, which would naturally cause intense physical or

mental suffering to the most devoted and self-sacrificing persons, bring only delight and satisfaction to the Bodhisattvas.

It has been more realistically said that the true gift of the Bodhisattva is not his flesh, but the gift of the law. The Mahāyāna, indeed, recognizes the beneficial activities of such Bodhisattvas as Nāgārjuna, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Yuan Chwang, and many other great thinkers and missionaries; whilst history records their influence on Chinese, Turks, Tibetans, Scythians, and many other races. The sufferings of these men for others were very real: many sacrificed ease, health, and life itself in their endeavours to propagate the faith.

For the layman who is a Bodhisattva there is always the duty of aiding the monks, of providing for their needs, and building them monasteries. The Mahāyāna, in fact, provides for monks and laity alike a vista, not so much of suffering as of helpful and cheerful activity, imbued with the desire to help others as the only possible means of, indirectly, aiding myself.

But this concentration upon compassion and the service of others, as the sole duty of Bodhisattvas, without moral safeguards, was a serious and dangerous weakness. The Bodhisattva was bound, at all costs, to promote the welfare and happiness of those who looked to him for help. If this involved the Bodhisattva in sin, it was better to sin than to make others unhappy.

There was no strict moral code to restrain or guide him; it was left to his private judgement to decide whether the benefit he was able to confer would justify the sin. For example, marriage was not considered fitting for a Bodhisattva, but if marriage would bring great happiness and satisfaction to the other partner in the marriage, it was better to marry than to be unkind.

And, after all, sin was not of great consequence to the Bodhisattva, for if he sins he has efficient succour available. By confession morning, mid-day, and evening to the Buddhas he receives forgiveness and cleansing for the sins committed in the preceding period.

Moreover, the *thought* of enlightenment renewed (the *bodhicitta* vow), and the *expression* of Universal Love, are efficacious for the removal of guilt.

The Mahāyānists think so highly of the virtue of developing *Bodhicitta* that all other disciplines are thrown into the shade by it, as the following stanza will show: 'After committing atrocious crimes, one can absolve himself from them in a moment by developing¹ Bodhicitta, just as some persons can escape punishment by being protected by powerful persons. It is only the ignorant who do not take to such an excellent refuge.'

'Even the gravest crimes, such as those of schism, parricide, slaying an Ārhant or a Buddha, breaking of relics, are pardoned without the necessity of auricular confession by the thirty-five Buddhas of confession.²

This ignoring of moral values led to serious moral deterioration in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

¹ Lit.: taking refuge in.

² See Keith, pp. 295-6, with references and footnotes.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Great or Dhyāni-Bodhisattvas

WE HAVE been describing Bodhisattvas who took their vows, and began their careers, as men. But Tantric Buddhism maintains that there are Bodhisattvas who never were men; they came forth from the spirit of Ādi-Buddha. They are called Dhyāni-Bodhisattvas, and are bound up with the theory of Ādi-Buddha. We have no evidence, however, to show that this theory existed in India before the tenth century, but some of these Bodhisattvas were known and worshipped centuries before that period.

The most influential and popular of all the great Bodhisattvas amongst Mahāyāna Buddhists in both ancient and modern times is Avalokiteśvara. He is the Bodhisattva who is believed to be perpetually incarnated in successive Dalai Lāmas of Tibet, just as Amitābha is incarnated in the Grand Lamas. He is also the tutelary deity of Tibet, and has passed in feminine guise into Chinese Buddhism, and thence into Korean and Japanese, as Kwan-yin or Kwannon, the Goddess of Mercy.

The name Avalokiteśvara is difficult to explain, but 'Iśvara' means etymologically 'king', 'monarch'. When speaking of Avalokita, however, who is not only a great god, but a 'god-providence', we cannot forget that Śiva is called the 'great lord' (Maheśvara) or simply, 'the lord' (Iśvara).

The Buddhists call Avalokita 'lord of compassionate glances'; he is a god whose face is turned in every direction in order to see everything and to save everybody; he is also called 'the all-sided one' (Samantamukha).

The texts clearly show that Avalokita is the sun, and, in

fact, Padmapāni ('lotus-bearer'), which is a name of Avalokita, is also a name of Sūriya ('sun').

The distinguished scholar M. Kern explains that Avalokita is a Buddhist Śiva in visible form, while Amitābha is the Śiva Brahman. The former is characterized by the 'measured' light of the sun and the moon, the latter is the ethereal and infinite light (*Amita*). Avalokita is also the Viśṇu of the Buddhists.¹

Though, as we have already suggested, the theory of Dhyāni-Bodhisattvas probably originated in the tenth century, the cult of Avalokita was known and practised centuries earlier. Fa-Hsien, the Chinese pilgrim about A.D. 400, when caught in a storm in his voyage from Ceylon to China, implored this Bodhisattva to rescue him.

Moreover, a Chinese translation of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* was made as early as A.D. 270. The basic idea is the same in both versions of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*—the exaltation of the marvellous redeemer Avalokiteśvara, who appears here as a typical Bodhisattva who declines to enter into Buddhahood so long as all creatures have not been emancipated. Evidently, at that time, he was regarded as a Bodhisattva who had begun his career as a man.

The opening chapter describes how he descends into the hell of fire, Avica, in order to set free the tormented from their pain. He enters hell, however, not as a fellow-sufferer, but as a mighty conqueror.

One of his wanderings takes him to Ceylon, which was then inhabited by female *rākshasas*, monsters who fed on human flesh. Avalokita changed himself into the charming form of the God of Love. The monsters were enchanted with him, and besought him to be their husband, and he agreed on condition that they would do whatever he ordered. Then he taught them the Noble Eight-fold Path and much besides, and converted them.

¹ See *Hinayāna*, p. 126.

Again he appears in Ceylon as the winged horse Balaha in order to carry away, and save from perishing, the shipwrecked merchants enticed by the giant sorceress. He rescues them and takes them back to India.

This story is also told in the *Jātaka* No. 196. But here the winged charger is identified with the Buddha in a previous birth. In the *Kārandavyūha*, however, Avalokiteśvara takes his place as the horse, and, amongst others, saves the caravan leader, who is Gautama Buddha in a previous birth.

We cannot follow this story in detail, but see the authorities quoted for further information.¹

How Avalokiteśvara gained his pre-eminent position it is impossible to discover. Maitreya (the future Buddha) was the only great Bodhisattva known to the Theravādins, and he must have taken precedence of him in the days when Avalokita first became known.

There are no Great Bodhisattvas and no trace of Avalokita in the *Mahāvastu*. And in the *Lalita*, among the 32,000 Bodhisattvas who listen to the Buddha, the author mentions Maitreya and several others, but there is no mention of Avalokita.

Avalokita plays a most important part in some of the *sūtras*, e.g. in the *Dharmasangīti*, where he extols charity, 'the great compassion', the only function of the Bodhisattvas, to which one must give oneself entirely, without fear of committing sin; if the exercise of charity involves wrongdoing, it is better to suffer the pains of hell than to deprive a creature of the hope he has placed in you. Here Avalokita is a *great* Bodhisattva, but he is not the only one, nor is he unquestionably the first in rank.

In the *Lotus of the True Law* Avalokita is far superior to the other Great Bodhisattvas who along with him listened to the Buddha, with the single exception of Mañjuśrī, who is probably his equal. But here he is 'the Saviour'; it is better

¹ Especially Thomas, pp. 189-92, and Nariman, pp. 72-6.

to think of him than to do honour to thousands of Buddhas. He assumes the form of Buddha, Bodhisattva, Maheśvara (Śiva), Vajrapāni, or any other of the Great Ones, as the case may be, the more easily to fulfil his task of mercy.

In the *Sukhāvatī* and the *Amitāyurdhyana-sūtra* we read that the Bodhisattvas are not equal among themselves. In the heaven of Amitābha there are two, Avalokita and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, almost as great and luminous as the Buddha, who sit on thrones equal to his. But Avalokita is the more majestic; this is due to his vow to bring all beings, without exception, into the Happy Land.

And while his glorious body illumines many worlds, he traverses them all in different forms, sometimes real, and sometimes magical. Like Amitābha he has parts of himself incarnated here and there. He never forgets for a moment his rôle as provider of the Sukhāvatī. It is he rather than Amitābha who is the Lord of Sukhāvatī. He is called Sukhāvatīśvara.

Avalokita rises still higher in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, and in the *Śūraṅgama*. In these books he is represented as being far superior to the Buddhas and to Samantabhadra: no Buddha possesses clairvoyance equal to his; all the Buddhas together could not estimate his worth. No other being besides him has such a marvellous body, which the Buddhas have difficulty in seeing, and each pore of which contains thousands of Buddhas, saints of all kinds, and entire worlds. And it is from the body of Avalokita, regarded from another point of view, that the gods issue.¹

We have already pointed out that in addition to being a demiurge, Avalokita is also a saviour; from his fingers flow rivers which cool the hells and feed the *pretas* (ghosts); he terrifies all demons, and puts even Vajrapāni to flight.

Here we see the Bodhisattvas assuming greater importance

¹ See Chap. 6, para. 11, *supra*.

than the Buddhas and to a large extent superseding them, just as the Brāhmaṇ priest became for the worshipper more important than the god he controlled, and the goddess, the god's *śaktī* or energy, more to be feared and appeased than the god.¹

There is no need for astonishment at this extraordinary mastery over men and things. Avalokita is the great *yogin*, the great magician; he is in possession of the formulas; but, above all, he possesses the only true formula: *Om mani padme hūm*. Is there a Buddha who possesses this 'hexa-syllabic knowledge'? No. Is there a being who possesses it? No. It belongs to Avalokita alone, and he reveals it to whomsoever he pleases.²

As we have dealt at some length with the most important of the Great Bodhisattvas, little need be added about the others.

Mañjuśrī is only second in importance and influence to Avalokiteśvara, and in some of the books he is placed above him. For example, he is named in the first rank of Bodhisattvas, before Avalokiteśvara, at the beginning of the *Lotus of the True Law* (translated into Chinese A.D. 147-86), where he is represented as a great converter.

Legend associates him with the revelation of the books of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, Revealer of the *Prajñā*, god of the word; he is the patron of the Great Vehicle, of the 'second dispensation', and becomes the God of Wisdom, a personage of high importance. According to Fa Hian, the followers of the Mahāyāna worshipped the *Prajñā*, Mañjuśrī, and Avalokiteśvara.³

Various legends are told of his former human lives. The *Mañjuśrīguṇa-kṣetravyūha* (translated into Chinese A.D. 300) tells how Mañjuśrī took his Bodhisattva vow: 'I do not wish to become a Buddha quickly, because I wish to remain to the

¹ See *E.R.E.*, VII. 125.

² See *E.R.E.*, II. 256-61, Thomas, pp. 70, 180, 187 ff., 211, 254, 258.

³ See *E.R.E.*, VIII. 405-6.

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 last in the world to save its beings. In all my existences
 I wish to follow the example of Akshobhya and to be a monk.¹

Mañjuśrī is one of the saviours and patrons invoked in 'Stanzas of Good Practice' (*Bhadracaryāgāthā*), one of the classical texts used every day by Buddhists of the Mahāyāna. Grunwedel remarks that Mañjuśrī and Brahmā share the favours of a common *saktī*, Sarasvatī.

As soon as the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas become 'gods', they inevitably become gods after the Hindu fashion. Avalokita has more likeness to Śiva, and Mañjuśrī to Brahmā. Mañjuśrī always occupies an important, and often the chief place, in Buddhist polytheism.

Mañjuśrī is also raised to the dignity of Ādi-Buddha, and, in the sculptures, sometimes bears on his head small figures of the five Dhyāni-Buddhas, to signify that he proceeds from them, and comprehends them. Mañjuśrī occupies a very important position in Chinese Buddhism, where he is worshipped as a god. According to a Nepalese tradition he came from China to Nepal.²

Another Great Bodhisattva is Vajrapāni ('Thunderbolt in hand'). He is a Bodhisattva of fairly ancient date. He is also an entirely orthodox Bodhisattva, for Śāntideva invokes him with great energy. But he is not a Bodhisattva like the others, since he is by birth the bearer of the thunderbolt. He is really Indra, an Indian deity, adopted by Buddhism, and not an original Buddhist saint.

Yet another prominent Bodhisattva is Samantabhadra, the divinity of religious ecstasy. According to the theory of *Dhyāni-Bodhisattvas* he is a very ancient Bodhisattva, and is associated with the Buddha Dipaṅkara. Therefore, he must have existed millions of world-cycles before Gautama and Avalokiteśvara.

¹ *Śikshāsamuccaya* (Petrograd, 1902), p. 13.

² See *E.R.E.*, I. 97 and VIII. 405-6.

PART THREE.—HINAYĀNA AND MAHĀYĀNA
PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS: A COMPARISON
AND A CONTRAST

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Introduction

WE KNOW that the Hinayānists and Mahāyānists lived and taught in the same monasteries. This was especially true of the great Buddhist University of Nālandā, where the Mahāsāṅghikas, the Sarvāstivādins, and other Hinayānists were intimately associated with the Mahāyānists for centuries.

We have the personal testimonies of contemporaries like Yuan Chwang (Hiuen-Tsiang) to the fact that even if the representatives of the various schools did not live on the most friendly terms because of their fundamental differences of belief, they did at least tolerate one another.

Therefore it is not always easy to discover where certain new doctrines and practices originated. For example, we know that the Mahāsāṅghika and the Sarvāstivāda Schools held the Bodhisattva doctrine, the *pāramitā* practices, and the Goal of Buddhahood for everybody, as well as, what is generally regarded as a distinctively Mahāyāna doctrine, the development of *Bodhicitta*.

But whether they originated these doctrines and practices, or borrowed them from the early Mahāyānists, is a question not easy to answer. There would be a constant exchange of views and ideas between the members of the various schools, and each would be quietly and even unconsciously influenced by the others.

Stcherbatsky states that of all the Hinayānists the Sautrāntikas were nearest to the Mahāyānists, and can be described as a transitional school. From Tibetan sources we know that they admitted the doctrine of the Dharmakāya, i.e. the divine Buddha, and that solves the question, because this dogma

is the common characteristic of all the schools of Mahāyāna.

The Sautrāntikas differed from the Mahāyānists, however, in that they admitted the reality of the phenomenal world, which, with them, included only sense-data, consciousness, and volition. The momentary flashes to which these entities were reduced were also conceived as real, not illusions, and their total extinction in Nirvāna was maintained.¹

Moreover, the Sautrāntikas admitted neither the *ālayavijñāna* of the Yogācāras, nor the principle of the *void* (*śūnyavāda*) of the Mādhyamikas.

The fact that the Mahāyānists adopted the Sarvāstivāda 'Life of the Buddha,' the *Lalitavistara*, is further evidence of the close contact of the schools and of their influence upon one another.

We have already drawn attention to the fact that Nālandā is generally acknowledged to be one of the most important centres of Mahāyāna teaching and influence. Few scholars, I think, would dispute the claim that it was the most important of all.

Nāgārjuna, the greatest of all the Mahāyānist creative thinkers and teachers, made Nālandā his headquarters. There he gathered together all the new Mahāyānist teachings into a comprehensive philosophical system, which he called the Mādhyamakā School, and which has remained to this day the most influential of all the Mahāyāna schools.

It is interesting to note, as Dr. Dutt points out, that Mahāyānism probably originated in the South of India some time before Kanishka, and had become a recognized form of Buddhism by the time of Kanishka, about the beginning of the Christian era. Moreover, Nāgārjuna and his two greatest disciples, Āryadeva and Nāgā, were born in South India. Therefore, the South may claim credit for being not only the

¹ See *Hinayāna*, pp. 79-81.

birthplace of Mahāyāna itself, but also of the most eminent of its earlier teachers.¹

Hinayānists and Mahāyānists use many words and terms in common, but often with widely different meanings. For example, Hinayānists speak of *Dharmakāya* as the Body of Doctrine. The Buddha had passed away into Nirvāna, but his teachings, his *Dharmakāya*, remained in the world to represent him. Some Hinayānists went farther and claimed that the Buddha's personality remained embodied in the truth, or law, taught by him.

The *Dharmakāya*, according to the Mahāyānists, is the ultimate Reality that underlies all particular phenomena. In Mahāyāna all the parts or elements are unreal (*śūnyā*), and only the whole, i.e. the *Whole* of the wholes (*dharmaṭā* = *dharmaṭā*) is real (*vastu*). The definition of reality in Mahāyāna is the following one: 'Unrecognizable from without, quiescent, undifferentiated in words, unrealizable in concepts, non-plural; this is the essence of reality.'²

We must now attempt to explain the central dogma of all the schools of Mahāyāna, the idea of *Śūnyatā*, the *void*, or, as they claim, the Absolute, because the Mahāyānists are all Monists. All Buddhists who accept the dogma of *śūnyatā* are Mahāyānists; all who reject it are Hinayānists. This dogma lies as a deep chasm between them.

Let us note, in passing, that both Hinayānists and Mahāyānists used the term *sarvam śūnyam* (all is essenceless) to describe the nature of the world, but they differed widely as to the extent to which the transitory nature of the world should be carried.

The Hinayānists declared that all things in the world were transitory, that there was no permanent soul or self or ego in man, and no underlying reality in material things. Every

¹ See Dutt, pp. 41-43.

² See Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Nirvāna*, pp. 40-1.

'whole' they regarded as a merely nominal existence. 'Man', for example, is just a name, but the *skandhas*, aggregates, or ultimate elements (*dharma*) of which he is composed, are real (*vastu*).¹

The Mahāyānists, however, went to the utmost limits and declared not only that all existing things are impermanent and unreal, but also that the elements of which they are composed are equally unreal. That is to say, they did not admit the real existence of the *skandhas* or elements, seventy-two in number, composing a being. They asserted that the *skandhas* exist only in imagination (*vikalpa*), or are illusory conceptions (*māyā*) held by the so-called beings with a defective vision due to ignorance. So that truth, according to the Mahāyānists, is *Śūnyatā* or *Dharma-nairātmya*.

The *Puṇḍarīka*, therefore, says that he who knows the *dharmas* as devoid of *ātman* knows the truth.²

The dogma of *Śūnyatā* in this extreme form was probably first set forth in the *Prajñāpāramitās*, the earliest of which may date from the first century B.C. We have already shown how great is the importance of the *Prajñāpāramitās* in the history of Buddhist literature, and how much the development of Mahāyāna depends on them.³

The Mahāyānists attributed these writings to the Buddha; they were 'the very word of the Buddha', and, in consequence, were considered to be the most authoritative and valuable of all their sacred writings.

They were written with the express purpose of establishing the dogma of *Śūnyatā*, and of winning over the Hinayānists to Mahāyāna. There is no pretence at argument; they set forth the doctrine of the *void* in a crude and dogmatic way, and declared that there is nothing in the world of our knowledge which has any real existence.

¹ See *Hinayāna*, pp. 79-80.

² See Chap. 9, paras. 9-14, *supra*.

³ See Dutt, p. 133.

They knew no restraint in their presentation of *Śūnyatā*, but went so far as to state that we ought not to trouble ourselves with the definition of either a monk or his *Nirvāṇa*. On ultimate analysis, monk and *Nirvāṇa* do not exist: they are mere hallucinations, and both being unreal (*śūnyatā*), the monk and *Nirvāṇa* are the same in character. Therefore, we ought to remove all misconceptions about the world, and make the realization of non-duality of everything whatsoever our aim.¹

¹ See Dutt, p. 186.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Nāgārjuna: the Chief Authority on Mahāyāna

NĀGĀRJUNA was the real founder of the Mādhyamaka School, and he did as much as could be done to place the dogma of Śūnyatā on a rational foundation. He used such *Prajñāpāramitās* as were already written, and wrote a commentary on one of them. But he went far beyond them, and by his subtlety, persuasiveness, and scorn, won over many Hinayānists to the whole-hearted belief in the voidness of all the things in the world which appear to our senses to be real.

The opponents of Negativism raised a natural objection. If all is 'void,' and if there is no beginning and no end, then there could not possibly be the 'Four Noble Truths', nor conduct of life on the principles of recognition of these verities, nor fruit of good or bad deeds, nor doctrine of the Buddha (*Dharma*), nor Monastic Order, and, finally, no Buddha himself. Accordingly the entire system of the Buddha's religion would fall to the ground.

To this Nāgārjuna replies: 'The doctrine of the Buddha is based on two verities—conventional truth (in which the profound sense is occult), and truth in the supreme sense. Whoso does not know the difference between these two truths does not understand the deep contents of the Buddha's precepts. Only as based on the truth of ordinary life can the supreme verity be inculcated, and only with the help of ultimate truth can Nirvāṇa be attained.'¹

Nāgārjuna sums up his doctrine by asserting that the truth is that all things are like an echo, a mirage, or images in dreams. When one realizes this he has neither love nor hatred for any

¹ See Nariman, pp. 90-1.

being, and, with a mind like the sky, he does not know of any distinctions as Buddha, Dharma, or Saṅgha, and has no doubts concerning anything. Being without doubt and without attachment, he attains Parinirvāṇa without *upādāna* (substratum of future births due to attachment to four wrong ideas).¹

This conception of *śūnyatā* is foreshadowed, but does not appear in a developed form, in the Pāli literature. For example, we find passages like the following: 'It has not been explained by me whether soul is the same as body or different from it; neither has it been explained by me whether Tathāgatā exists or does not exist after death, or whether Tathāgatā not exists or not-not exists after death.'²

Another suggestion of *śūnyatā* in the Pāli *Pitakas* is given in words attributed to the Buddha. It is recorded in the *Brahmajāla-sutta* of the *Dīgha-Nikāya* that he gave the following answer to the question whether he would or would not live on somewhere after the death of the body: 'The outward form, brethren, of him who has won the truth (Tathāgatā) stands before you, but that which binds him to rebirth (viz., *tanha*, thirst) is cut in twain. So long as his body shall last, so long do gods and men behold him. On the dissolution of the body, beyond the end of his life, neither gods nor men shall see him.'

And again, the Buddha is reported to have said: 'There is, disciples, a condition where there is neither earth nor water, neither air nor light, neither limitless space, nor limitless time, neither any kind of being, neither ideation nor non-ideation, neither this world nor that world. There is neither *arising* nor *passing-away*, nor dying, neither cause nor effect, neither change nor standing-still.'³

¹ Quoted by Dutt, p. 229.

² See *Cūla-Mālunkyā-sutta*, S.B.B., V. 304-7.

³ See *Hīnayāna*, pp. 99-100.

Here we have teaching so similar to the Mahāyāna doctrine of *Śūnyatā*, that it is no easy matter to distinguish between them. The Mahāyānists, indeed, claim that the Buddha taught their chief doctrines, and that the Hinayānists had gradually modified and changed them.

Both the Mādhyamikas and the Yogācāras recognize that the truth is beyond the four limitations, namely the same or different or both or not both. They declared that the essence of being, *dharmatā*, is beyond verbal definition or intellectual comprehension, for there is neither birth nor death in it, and it is even like unto Nirvāṇa.¹

Mahāyāna professed to believe in an ultimate eternal reality, but it nowhere describes this reality in positive language, as we suggested above. The *Dharmakāya* is a cosmological ultimate.

'A Platonist would say that the Tathāgatās are so many copies of the *Dharmakāya*, that the *Dharmakāya* is an eternal essence which manifests itself in the Tathāgatās.' From an absolute point of view there is no difference among things and among characters of things. Things are void (*śūnyatā*) like the daughter of a barren woman; characters are void like the beauty of this unreal daughter.

Things are void because there is no real origination of things—if no origination, no destruction, an eternal inexistence. There is no difference between existence (*Samsāra*) and Nirvāṇa. Not being produced, not being destroyed, things are from the beginning quiescent (*ādiśānta*); they are really naturally in Nirvāṇa.²

Nāgārjuna, in the first verse of the *Mādhyamaka-śāstra*, said that the Middle Path (*Mādhyamarga*) can be found only in the eight no's, 'No annihilation, no production, no destruction, no persistence, no unity, no plurality, no coming-in, no going-out.'

¹ See Suzuki, p. 175.

² See E.R.E., IX. 851-3.

He applies these eight no's to all things in the world and finds them all void.

In the 'Discourse on Buddha-essence,' Vasubandhu says: 'Those who see only the transitoriness of existence are called Nihilists, and those who see only the eternity of Nirvāṇa are called Eternalists. Both views are incorrect.'

Vasubandhu then proceeds to say: 'Therefore, the *Dharma-kāya* of the *Tathāgatā* is free from both extremes, and on that account it is called the Great Eternal Perfection. When viewed from the absolute standpoint of Suchness, the logical distinction between Nirvāṇa and Samsāra cannot in reality be maintained, and hereby we enter upon the realm of non-duality. And this realm of non-duality is the Middle Path of Nirvāṇa, not in the nihilistic sense, but in its Mahāyānic significance.'¹

Tathatā (thusness) like *ākāśa* (space) is homogeneous (lit. has one taste—*ekarasa*), pure and changeless: it is the Absolute immanent in the phenomenal world. The *Siddhi* points out that the Absolute is so-called because it is absolutely changeless. It is always and ever completely devoid of differentiations as subject and object, which are nothing but the mere play of imagination, and hence absolutely non-existing.²

Both Hinayānists and Mahāyānists accepted the Buddha's two fundamental doctrines of *Āryasatyas* and *Pratītya-samutpāda* (Pāli, *Paticca-Sammuppāda*). The *Āryasatyas*, as commonly known, are *dukkha* (misery), *samudaya* (origin of misery), *nirodha* (cessation of misery), and *magga* (means of the cessation of misery).³

Of the four truths the second and third comprise the *Pratītya-samutpāda*. The chief object of this formula of causation is to establish that although the separate elements (*dharmas*) are not connected with one another, their mani-

¹ See Suzuki, p. 359.

² See *Hinayāna*, pp. 51, 66-70, 88.

³ See Dutt, p. 235.

festations in time, as well as in space, are subject to definite laws—the laws of causation.¹

But the conception of causality was adapted to the character of these entities which could neither move nor change, but could only appear and disappear. Causation was called dependently—co-ordinated-origination or dependent existence.²

The meaning of this was that every momentary entity sprang into existence, or flashed up, in co-ordination with other moments. Its formula was: 'If there is this, there appears that.'³

This Law admitted of only two exceptions; Space and Nirvāṇa, acknowledged to be eternal unchanging elements.⁴

Note that the elements (*dharmas*) had four salient features: (1) They were non-substantial, (2) had no duration—the element is evanescent, (3) they were in a beginningless state of commotion, and (4) this unrest had its end in final deliverance.⁵

According to this system, the individual exists only for a *moment*, which is really a point in space-time. 'The Buddhist term for an individual is *santāna*, i.e. "stream", namely of interconnected facts. There is a special force called *prāpti*, which holds these elements combined. This stream of elements, kept together, and not limited to the present life, but having its roots in past existences, and its continuation in future ones—is the Buddhist counterpart of the "Soul" or "Self" of other systems.'⁶

But how was it possible for the Mahāyānists to accept the two fundamental doctrines of the Buddha when they denied

¹ See *ibid.*, p. 88.

² See *ibid.*, pp. 81-2.

³ See *Majjhima*, ii. 32, and *Samyutta*, ii. 28. See also *Hinayāna*, p. 81.

⁴ See Dutt, pp. 206-8, Stcherbatsky, *Central Conception*, p. 28.

⁵ See *Hinayāna*, pp. 77, 78, 80-1, 97, 101.

⁶ See *Central Conception*, p. 26, and *Hinayāna*, pp. 80-2.

the reality of the *dharma*s, the elements of being, and denied also the reality of the *Āryasatyas*?

The answer is, as we have seen before in another connexion, that the Mahāyānists believed that the Buddha spoke both conventional truth and real truth—i.e. the commonplace truth by which we live in this world, and the absolute truth which is eternal. They held that conventional truths were very useful for leading immature beings forward on the upward way, and that they still have their uses for those who are incapable of grasping absolute truth. As we have to live in this unreal world we must accept it at its face value. If we do so live, we shall come at last to realize ultimate truth, i.e. the *Dharmakāya*=the void (*śūnyatā*).

Nevertheless, they held that from the standpoint of Absolute truth, these two doctrines of the Buddha, which the Hinayānists accepted literally, and upon which they built their religious lives, had no real existence, but only an existence similar to a mirage or to the objects in a dream.

Mahāyānists criticized the Hinayānists' theory that the elements are real, and also their conception of a momentary entity (*ksana*). They said that the theory was unwarranted and not capable of resisting criticism, especially as it was held that the separate elements were active in phenomenal life, and quiescent (*śāntā*) or extinct (*niruddha*) in Nirvāṇa. This, they affirmed, was contrary to reason. If the elements were real they could not disappear totally. They were, accordingly, declared to have always been quiescent (*ādiśāntā*) or extinct from the outset.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Hīnayānist and Mahāyānist Views of Nirvāṇa Compared and Contrasted

PERHAPS a comparison of the Hīnayānist and the Mahāyānist views of the nature of Nirvāṇa will enable us to understand more clearly this dogma of the void.

The Hīnayānists believe that, in the perfected Buddhist saint, the element which would have caused rebirth, renewed existence, is there no longer—he is like a lamp in which the oil is exhausted and the light flickers out, and no man can say of the light, it went here or went there.

The aim is to bring about the gradual quietening of the *elements of being* (which are regarded as real) and in the end their extinction. It is believed that all the sensations and sense-data can be eliminated; that is to say, they can be picked out one by one and suppressed, so that they can never return, 'and where before there was an element now there is only a blank': this blank (*nirodha*) is called 'cessation through wisdom'. A Buddhist scholar has said that Parinirvāṇa is best conceived of in the terms of mathematics as *remainderlessness*.

For more detailed information I would refer the reader to my first volume, where I have discussed the subject of Nirvāṇa from the Hīnayānist standpoint, at some length.¹

Nāgārjuna is very severe in his criticism of the Hīnayānists for believing that they can extinguish the elements (*dharma*) and so attain Nirvāṇa. He says that Nirvāṇa does not consist in the eradication or destruction of anything. A being fancies that something exists, and that Nirvāṇa is the end of it, while, in fact, that something does not exist, and therefore there

¹ See *Hīnayāna*, pp. 95-107.

can be neither its continuance nor extinction. Nirvāna really consists in the avoidance of the conception that something exists.

The *Saddharma-Pundarīka* also points out an important difference between the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna theories of how to attain Nirvāna. The Hinayānists believe that a being, by comprehending the *Āryasatyas*, including the *Pratītya-samutpāda*, attains Nirvāna, i.e. he passes from Samsāra to Nirvāna, from the *laukika* (worldly) to the *lokottara* (transcendental) state.

While according to the Mahāyānists, a being, by comprehending the fact that there is no difference between Samsāra and Nirvāna, that the world has only a relative existence, and that it is actually unreal, but appears real to the deluded mind—realizes the true Nirvāna, which is nothing but the *śūnyatā* or *Tathatā*, the absolute principle underlying the universe.

The moment an individual realizes that he is the Reality, that Samsāra is identical with Nirvāna, he becomes perfect, i.e. a Buddha. One must eradicate from his mind the conception not only of his own individuality, but also of the *substantiality* of anything whatever perceived or cognized by him. When a being attains a state of mind in which he cannot distinguish himself from anything in the world or from the Absolute, he is said to attain Nirvāna in the absolute sense.¹

Again, Nāgārjuna pities his opponents, the Hinayānists, for their inability to grasp the true sense of *śūnyatā*, or the object of establishing *śūnyatā*, and for their false imagination. The object of teaching *śūnyatā*, he says, is to bring about a complete cessation of all *prapañca* (i.e. looking upon unity as manifold).

He adds further that the view held by the Hinayānists that *moksha* (emancipation) is attained by the destruction of action

¹ Quoted by Dutt, pp. 188, 233-4.

(*karma*) and passion (*kleśa*) is incorrect. It is evident that *sankalpa* (imagination) is the source of all these, from which it follows that *karma* and *kleśa* are only products of the *prapañca* which takes hold of the mind of a worldly being.

All these worldly thought-creations cease to exist when a person realizes the non-existence of the things which are commonly supposed to have a real existence. If a person realizes that passions (*kleśas*) do not originate, he cannot have any idea of good or bad action, and consequently birth, old age, disease, and death. Thus the realization of *śūnyatā* brings about the cessation of all the *prapañcas*, and so it is said that the realization of *śūnyatā* is the same as the realization of *Nirvāṇa*.¹

Suzuki summarizes the teaching of Sthiramati in his *Discourse on Mahāyāna-Dharmadhātu* as follows:

'Nirvāṇa, Dharmakāya, Tathāgatā, Tathāgatā-garbha, Paramārtha, Buddha, Bodhicitta, or Bhūtatathātā—all these terms signify merely so many different aspects of one and the same reality; and Bodhicitta is the name given to a form of the Dharmakāya as it manifests itself in the human heart, and its perfection, or negatively its liberation from all egoistic impurities, constitutes the state of Nirvāṇa.'²

By whatever name it may be called, the ultimate aim of Mahāyānists, equally with Hinayānists, is the attainment of Nirvāṇa, which they believe to be, in some sense or other, impossible to explain, the ultimate Reality.

¹ Quoted by Dutt, pp. 212-13.

² See Suzuki, p. 299.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

The Distinctive Teaching of the Vijñānavādins
or Yogācāras

WE HAVE the three systems of Aśvaghosa, Āryasaṅga and Dignāga. As Mahāyānists they were all believers in the Cosmical Body of the Buddha (*Dharmakāya*). But in the process of realization of this Absolute they all admit the existence of one initial Store-consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*) in addition to that indefinite consciousness (*citta* = *manas* = *vijñāna*), which was admitted in the Hinayāna, and they all deny the reality of the external world.

They thus reduce all the elements (*dharma*s) of Hinayāna to modes of one conscious principle. Aśvaghosa's system is in all essential points the same as the Mādyamikas', except that it accepts the theory of the 'all-conserving mind' (*ālaya-vijñāna*) as a stage in the evolution of 'Suchness' (*Tathatā*) in which consciousness is awakened.¹

Though this school is more closely associated with Asaṅga (Āryasaṅga) than with any other teacher, he did not originate its special teaching that void-intellect is the final reality. As we have seen, Aśvaghosa hinted at this, and the *Ashtasāhrika* definitely teaches that thought, even the thought of the Perfection of Wisdom, is non-thought, and in a state of non-thought there is neither existence nor non-existence; all things are void and the void is imperishable.

Moreover, the *Lankāvatāra* teaches plainly that the belief in the self and in the external world is mere imagination. Nothing exists but thought. Things are nothing but mental

¹ See Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Nirvana*, pp. 31-2.

creations. The only reality is mind without differentiation, which is called 'store-consciousness' (*ālaya-vijñāna*).

This 'store-consciousness' is conceived of as the one reality beyond all differentiation, the Absolute, which is beyond the reach of thought. All else is illusion. This teaching is almost identical with the teaching of the *Vedānta* that the human soul is God.

Note that illusion in human life consists in regarding the objectification of one's own mind as a world independent of that mind.

The *Vijñānavādins* could also point to the famous utterance of the Buddha, 'This three-fold world is only thought', which is equivalent to the doctrine of the *Upanishads*: 'Verily, all this Universe is Brahman.'

Asaṅga's teaching is much more fully elaborated than that found in the *Lankāvatāra*, but, in all essentials, it is almost identical with it, and may be directly dependent upon it. Briefly, it is this: the external world is illusion, only thought exists.

'Asaṅga terms the mind the *ālaya*, i.e. abode or *nidus* where all things, both subjective and objective, are latent, and whence they are projected and manifested. The *ālaya* contains the seed (*bīja*) from which all the illusions of existence spring.'

In the *Vijñānavāda* we have definitely the conception of *void intellect* as the final reality, and though the Vedāntic Absolute is *being*, Brahman, its existence is clearly on a par with the existence of the 'void intellect' in *Vijñānavāda*.

Vasubandhu, who was closely associated with his brother Asaṅga in later life, taught that all phenomena, both material and non-material, originate in mind. If we once fully understood that nothing else exists but mind, then the objective world would cease to exist for us.

According to this theory, only enlightened wisdom (*jñāna*)

exists, by means of which we can unite in the *Tathatā* ('thusness') which transcends speech and thought—*Tathatā*, Absolute Reality, equals *Dharmakāya*, which in turn equals *void-thought*.

Āryadeva, a younger contemporary of Nāgārjuna, forms a link between Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga. He, too, seems to have held the view that mind or thought is the one true reality, and that all else is void.

There seems to be little practical difference between Nāgārjuna's doctrine of the void, and Asaṅga's and Vasubandhu's doctrine of *mere idea*, since both end in *Sarvam śūnyam*, 'all is essenceless'.

The Yogācāras differed from the Mādhyamikas, however, in attempting to find a relation between the Absolute and the individual, and in doing so they asserted that there is in all sentient beings *ālaya-vijñāna*, which, though originally pure, becomes polluted by delusions and dichotomizes itself into me and not-me, subject and object, the former becoming mind (*manas*) and the latter the external world.

While Nāgārjuna gave no positive explanation of the relation between phenomena and the Absolute, the Yogācāras hold that it consists in the two being 'neither different nor non-different'. Thus so far as the store-consciousness is non-different from the Absolute it is entirely universal and undifferentiated, and the positive explanation involves a contradiction to be surmounted by the methods of the mystic. But in the Yogācāra philosophy the store-consciousness is still throughout an individual consciousness.

Therefore, according to the Yogācāras, Nirvāṇa consists in the ceasing of the mind to dichotomize, and in realizing that there exists only *citta*, and that the phenomenal world is a delusion of the *citta*.

The *Lankāvatāra* says that Nirvāṇa consists in the removal of the imagining intellect. Just as forms in a mirror are seen

but do not exist there, so also in the mirror of *vāsanā* (knowledge derived from memory, or an impression remaining unconsciously in the mind, i.e. the error of thought which posits an external world) foolish people see *citta* as two-fold.

One must eradicate from his mind the conception not only of his own individuality but also of the reality of anything whatsoever perceived or cognized by him. When a being attains a state of mind in which he cannot distinguish himself from any other thing in the world or from the Absolute he is said to attain Nirvāṇa in the absolute sense.

The Mahāyānists hold that all beings other than Buddhas are under delusions, the nature of which varies according to their spiritual advancement. An ordinary man is as much under the delusion that he has a wife, a son, and property, as the Hinayānist saints, the Ārhats, who think they have attained Nirvāṇa, a state of perfect rest and happiness, and have gone beyond the three worlds.¹

All Mahāyānists are agreed that the doctrine of the void cannot be established by reasoning, or by any intellectual effort. It must be perceived by intuition. The Absolute is beyond speech, beyond knowledge, even that of the completely equipped Buddha, but it reveals itself to the Ārya, a conception closely parallel to the doctrine of the revelation of the Absolute in the Vedānta.

Nevertheless, meditation on non-existence leads on to further advances culminating in the realization of the voidness of the void (*śūnyatā-śūnyatā*), and the mind, freed from the ideas of existence and non-existence, will rest for ever in the absence of any content or categories. The essential aim is to repudiate either affirmation or negation, or the combination of both, or the denial of both: this is ever the true Middle Way of the Buddhist.

¹ See Thomas, pp. 238-9, Dutt, pp. 195, 197, 203-4, E.R.E., IX. 846-53, and Keith, pp. 235-6.

Nonetheless, it must be recognized that even the attainment of this way is not the absolute truth, for that is silence, unconsciousness. It is not enough to be convinced of the truth that all is only consciousness. He who grasps an object and says, 'This is *vijñaptimātra*,' has not reached *vijñaptimātra* (consciousness only). If he had, there would be neither object to grasp, nor grasper.

'When consciousness does not apprehend an object, then it is established in *vijñaptimātratā*; for when there is nothing to grasp there is no grasping.'

'When he is without mind, without apprehending, his knowledge is supramundane. There is revulsion from the object, through the abandonment of the two kinds of weakness, i.e. the two obstructions, belief in a real self, and belief in the reality of things.'

'That is the realm without *āsravas* (running sores), inconceivable, good, fixed, happy, with body released; this is what is called the dharmabody of the great Sage.'¹

The Bodhisattva, who through innumerable world-cycles (billions of years) has pressed on and attained the highest state of perfection, the state of Buddhahood ('the dharmabody of the great Sage', i.e. not merely a Buddha, but *Buddha*, the ultimate undifferentiated reality, *suchness*), alone has reached *vijñaptimātra*, the state of 'consciousness only'.

As Asaṅga says: 'On the pure-stage (free from the *āsravas*) there is neither oneness nor plurality of Buddhas; not oneness owing to their formerly having had bodies, not plurality, because like space they have no bodies.'² The *āsravas* are (1) sensuous pleasures, (2) belief in personal immortality, and (3) ignorance.

Here we have the usual explanation of the absolute unity posited by the system. There is thus also an infinity of

¹ See Vasubandhu's *Trimśikā* (thirty verses), 28-30.

² See *Mahāyānalank*, ix. 26.

Buddhas. They are beings who have completed the career and have taught the doctrine; they exist now in a state of bliss, but behind all illusion and relative truth they are the *One Universal Reality*.

Therefore it is not by thought that one can attain to the highest knowledge, because thought itself is an illusion, but one difficult to be rid of. The Hinayānist Ārhat accepts the non-existence of the self, he strives to eliminate desire, but he believes in the aggregates as real, he accepts misery as real, and he does not know that in thought there is the food which nourishes desire for ever. To destroy thought is essential, and that is far from easy for those who know that all is void—it is impossible for the Ārhat.¹

The most remarkable feature in the Mahāyānist conception of Absolute Reality is expressed in the formula: "What is sin or passion, that is Intelligence; what is birth and death (or transmigration), that is Nirvāṇa." Samsāra is Nirvāṇa, because there is, when viewed from the ultimate nature of the Dharmakāya, nothing going out of, nor coming into, existence (Samsāra being only apparent): Nirvāṇa is Samsāra when it is coveted and adhered to.²

To *deny* the existence of the world and sentient beings suggests that there is something to deny. Wisdom suggests that all thought of existence or non-existence should be given up—the mind should become a blank. The following illustration is used. A monk with defective vision (astigmatism) sees hairs in his rice-bowl. He complains of this to a monk with perfect sight, who looks into the bowl and neither sees, nor not-sees hairs, because they are not there. In the self-same way, the perfectly enlightened saint neither sees the world nor not-sees it, because it is not there.

Only by the methodically exercised practice of *yoga*, and

¹ See Thoma, pp. 240-2, Keith, pp. 276, 277 n., 280, 285, 288.

² See Suzuki, pp. 352-5.

especially by means of self-induced hypnotic trances, can the devotee realize for himself the *śūnyatā-śūnyatā* (the voidness of the void). In these ecstatic trances, called *Jhānas*, he is able by stages to reach a point where everything appears unreal and empty.

In the first stage of this ecstatic trance all idea of the existence of objects in a state of separation is lost, all discrimination between 'a this' and 'a that' is done away, and there remains only a consciousness of an infinitude of space.

In the second stage, the idea of infinite space is transcended, and its place taken by the idea of an infinitude of consciousness.

In the next higher stage, the idea of anything at all, of any kind of infinitude, whether of space or consciousness, falls away, and the only idea present is that of nothingness.

In the last stage, all idea whatsoever ceases, whether of something or nothing. There is here neither perceiving nor yet not-perceiving of aught; all predication, or possibility of predication, has come to an end. This is the state of 'empty-consciousness'.¹

In the long-prepared ecstasy the saint has beheld and grasped the all-unity, and although he awakes to normal life and finds the world just as he left it, where he perceives colours, sounds, and so on, sees the distinction of subject and object, feels feelings and thinks thoughts, yet because he believes that he has realized for himself the *śūnyatā-śūnyatā* (the voidness of the void), he no longer doubts that all these apparent things and experiences are empty and unreal, dreamlike and illusory.²

In this connexion Suzuki says: 'In order to reach the highest truth we must boldly plunge with our whole being into a region where absolute darkness, defying the light of intellect, is supposed to prevail. We must resort to the faith which has been planted in the heart, and by faith I mean

¹ See *Hinayāna*, pp. 102-3.

² See Thomas, pp. 201-2.

Prajñā (wisdom), transcendental knowledge (*Parinishpanna*), that comes direct from the intelligence-essence of the Dharmakāya.

'Absolute truth is void in its ultimate nature, for it contains nothing concrete or real or individual that makes it an object of particularization. But this must not be understood in the sense of absolute nothingness. It is not, as such, an object of intellectualization or of demonstrative knowledge. It underlies everything conditional and phenomenal, and does not permit itself to be a particular object of discrimination.'

'Here we enter into the region of the unknowable. The spiritual facts we experience are not demonstrable, for they are so direct and immediate that the uninitiated are altogether at a loss to get a glimpse of them.'¹

Suzuki is quite correct in saying that the ordinary man will not be able to make head or tail of his statement: he is not expected to do so.

¹ See Suzuki, pp. 93-4.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Certain Practical, Ethical, and Religious Conclusions

NEVERTHELESS, there are certain ethical and religious conclusions that we can draw with certainty from our study of Mahāyāna as set forth by its greatest thinkers and exponents.

Pure Mahāyāna forbids egotism, but it equally forbids altruism, as Keith says, and sees no merit in the pity of the human heart for distress. Altruism implies existence, and is therefore fatal; there is no perfection, compassion, morality, patience (*ksanti*), energy, concentration (*samadhi*), unless it is permeated by the essential intuition of nothingness: otherwise these virtues are blind and unavailing.¹

On this subject that great authority on Mahāyāna, de la Vallée Poussin, writes as follows: 'Ultimately, there cannot be true religious life, there cannot be deliverance, as long as the faithful do not know that Buddhas are mere names: the enlightened devotee adores celestial persons whom he knows to be pure phantasms; the enlightened giver pities beings while knowing that they do not exist.'²

However difficult it may seem to us to reconcile the negativism of the Mahāyāna System with the renunciation and self-sacrifice with reference to other creatures, as taught by Śāntideva and other writers on the Bodhisattva doctrine, we find that they attempt to bridge the gap on the familiar lines of the two varieties of truth. The Absolute Truth is that in the end everything in the world is vacuity and nullity. Nonetheless, it is only the delusion as regards the *Ego* which is pernicious. The delusion as regards duties is beneficent.³

¹ See Keith, p. 280.

² See *E.R.E.*, IX. 851-3.

³ See Poussin's *Bouddhism*, pp. 109 ff.

Still it is sufficiently strange that Śāntideva should close his great book, the *Bodhicaya*, on the life and career of a Bodhisattva, recognized to be the loftiest and most deeply religious of all books on this subject in Mahāyāna literature, on a note of sadness, if not of despair: 'Since all being is so vacuous and null, what can, what shall be acquired? Who can be honoured, who can be reproached? How can there be joy and sorrow, the loved and the hateful, avarice and non-avarice? Wherever you search for them you find them not.'¹

Nariman, an Indian scholar with a comprehensive knowledge of Indian religions, and a specialist knowledge of some, including Mahāyāna Buddhism, adds the following comment:

'It seems to be the curse of Indian mentality that whenever it soars too high it lands itself in absurdity. Thus the legends of sacrifice often turn into ludicrous tales, and so does the whole fabric of the philosophy of Mahāyāna end in—Nothing.'²

Suzuki, in his chapter on Practical Buddhism, speaks as follows: 'The modification of pure reason, however, is necessary from the human point of view, because mere abstraction is contentless, lifeless, and has no value for our practical life; and again, because our religious cravings will not be satisfied with empty concepts lacking vitality. What practical transformations then has the doctrine of Suchness to undergo in order to meet the religious demands?

'Buddhists ascribe to the Dharmakāya innumerable merits and virtues, and an absolute perfect intelligence, and make it an inexhaustible fountain-head of love and compassion; and it is in this that the Dharmakāya finally assumes a totally different aspect from a mere metaphysical principle, cold and lifeless.

'The Dharmakāya is perfectly free from all passions and prejudices. This should be understood in the sense that "God maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and

¹ ix. 153 f.

² See Nariman, pp. 108-9.

sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust". We know that the Dharmakāya is intelligence, because it directs the course of the universe not blindly but rationally.¹

"The Bodhisattva never desires a complete absorption in the Absolute, in which no individual existences are distinguishable. He always leaves the "will to live" unhurt, as it were, so that he may come into this world of particulars, ever and anon."²

Note that personal immortality cannot be hoped for, nor would any philosophical Buddhist desire it. His idea of bliss is to be completely absorbed in, and to lose his identity, in the Absolute.

So we see that in this form of practical Mahāyāna the Absolute is idealized and equated sometimes with Brahman, and then, Bodhicitta corresponds to the soul or self in Vedānta. The Bodhicitta, indeed, is regarded as *real*, but only because it is really Dharmakāya, and all else is *Māya*.

As Suzuki says in another place: 'The universe in its entirety is an infinite mind, and our limited mind with its transmarginal consciousness is a microcosm. What the finite mind feels in its inmost self must also be what the cosmic mind feels, nay, we can go a step farther, and say that when the human mind enters the region lying beyond the border of subjectivity and objectivity, it is in communion with the heart of the universe, whose secrets are revealed here without reserve.'³

Again, the Absolute is equated with God, as understood by Christians, and then Dharmakāya is seen as one who directs the course of the universe not blindly but rationally, whose nature is love, and who embraces all beings with fatherly tenderness.

According to both Suzuki and McGovern, the Absolute is immanent in all sentient beings, from the highest god to the

¹ See Suzuki, pp. 217, 219, 225, 239, and Chap. 20, last 9 paras. *supra*.

² See Suzuki, p. 407.

³ See *ibid.*, p. 122.

most insignificant insect or amoeba, and also transcendent: 'It came from nowhere, and it departs for nowhere; its ultimate reality is like unto the vastness of space.'

Such is the practical religion of a small minority of intellectual Buddhists, but not by any means of all the intellectuals, for it is said that Buddhism in Japan alone is represented by thirteen sects and fifty-eight sub-sects. Each sect has its own college instituted solely for the benefit of scholars who make a special study of its particular doctrine.¹

The Popular Religion of the masses of the people in all Mahāyāna Buddhist lands consists in the worship of Amitābha, 'the Buddha of Immeasurable Light', who dwells in the Western Paradise, together with belief in the existence of powerful malignant invisible beings, who must be continually propitiated to avert their anger. We have described these popular cults in the chapters on Religion in Japan, China, and Tibet.

Amitābha is a god of grace, who saves people almost in spite of themselves 'as a cat carries her young in her mouth'. All worshippers of Amitābha, by the grace of the god, without personal efforts or merits, may, by just thinking of Amitābha at the moment of death, pass into the 'Happy Land'.

McGovern says that the Sukhāvati School eliminates all the preceding stages, and seeks to attain Nirvāṇa by entering directly into the Pure Land of the Universal Buddha.

Amongst the stages eliminated is the Mahāyāna doctrine of the Bodhisattva career, which we have already described, and the doctrine of Karma, which Gautama Buddha took over from the earlier Indian thinkers. The theory of Karma is that sentient beings are born and die many times, and that the deeds done in one life will be rewarded or punished, strictly according to their deserts, in another life. The law works inevitably, and is strictly just. Neither god nor man can

¹ See Thomas, pp. 255-6.

interfere with it or alter it. This doctrine the Mahāyānists took over from Hīnayāna.¹

Suzuki, however, mentions a strange modification of this doctrine of Karma in modern Mahāyāna. He says: 'The law of Karma is an eternal ordinance of the will of the Dharmakāya as manifested in this world of particulars. We must not confuse a transient accident of human society with an absolute decree issued from the world authority.'²

Vasubandhu, late in life, turned his attention to the texts of the Paradise Mahāyāna. He opened his great commentary on these texts with a prayer to Amitābha, and prescribed five methods of worship to those who desire communion with the god of the Land of Bliss. U. Wogihara suggests that Vasubandhu really believed in the Amitābha doctrine, which has no connexion with either Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna Idealism. In his earlier works even the name of Amitābha is not mentioned.³

Evidently he realized, as Suzuki did at a later day, that however essential pure reason might be for the satisfaction of the mind, our religious cravings will not be satisfied with empty concepts lacking vitality. Even the doctrine of vacuity must undergo practical transformations in order to meet the religious demands of men.

Belief in Amitābha and his Happy Land is the religion of the two Japanese sects of Jodoshu and Shiushu. The latter has the largest number of adherents of any Buddhist sect in Japan.

This completes our study of the Origin, Evolution, and Consummation of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

¹ See *Hīnayāna*, Chap. 10, pp. 83-94. 'Karma and Rebirth'.

² See Suzuki, p. 191.

³ See Chap. 11, pp. 78-80, *supra*.

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